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Theatre Australia

Hayes Gordon in *Annie*
Playscript: Pandora's Cross
New York Theatre
Mick Rodger

Comprehensive Review Section
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Roberto Gerhard





Theatre

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#COMMENT#

At the time of writing the Tate auction remains unsold. On August 13th a comment meeting is scheduled, and on the matter will be in some degree settled whether T4 appears in season. However, still with commenting on the experts and explanations for the failure which appear hotter than the fire in deaths of one company.

The Australia Council were being naive if they thought their decision to raise funding would be a quick and clean deal. The Tate are determined to fight, they have too much at stake to give in easily. The State Government are the most in an increasingly murky landscape and have reasons to be pulled both ways. But if the Tate managers to stage a coup and pull themselves out of the quicksand, it will be almost certainly to a reduced level of subsidy, and the open remaining open to them will be limited.

One of the reasons the Australia Council would happily share printing in most thousands of dollars in TV was the decreasing returns offered by the magazine. Although Robert Hargrave says he has not wanted all last year's programme, this application was only eight months ago. In the past, his share in funding, successful, presumably to come out in the discharge their present debt. Unofficially, it seems that the Tate application would have received far greater sympathy if negotiations with John Hill had been successful. Hill is used to working with comparatively successful budgets, but a lack of thought Hargrave's negotiations with Peter Hall and Katherine Hepburn (and of world theatre) will have to be considered.

Light production would also seem to require, let alone justify, the viewing costs of two shows. One of the NSW Government's considerations must be maintaining the income of the Opera House Drama Theatre, for which the Tate already pays a quarter of a million dollars a year. To move out would be an obvious way to cut down the Opera Company's spending, but their entire existence, the Parade, is no longer secure, and to move to the University of New South Wales, the owners of the theatre, are finally getting active about the constant occupation of their premises in a expensive rent by the Tate. Questions have been asked at the highest level, and members of the Drama Department demonstrated outside the opening of *The Artist*.

It is the State Government who again helps to fund the theatre's activities, the Tate will almost certainly have to continue to run Drama Theatre. Thus, of course, there are no alternatives to working budgets as present available to them, as the administrative heart of the company the leading in C Rowland Street, Alexandria, will have to be retained. It was partly the loss of capital expenditure and the temporary structure that is evident that took the Tate's subsidy into general help.

But the Tate has shown an openness to reform, the measures demanded by the Arts and Councils. Much information of financial administration, financial manager and tonight's director have all been carried out, despite an apparently resolute stance. In April the Theatre Board was a little surprisingly watching the company well and "wishes to see that the Tate program, under the leadership of an outstanding artistic director" so surely a more constructive move would be to fund it

some level of openness, with further information. Clearly, the Tate is in a corner in any case in the delicate state company, one of these would have to be the production of Australian plays in accordance with the Theatre Board's previous declared policy. It is unclear, especially that the Tate chose to establish the Sydney Centre season of new and Australian work to work with what has instead set to be an international season of classical and a limited selection of Australian.

But whatever the language of performance — and this language has never been an apology — the Tate is an established theatre company with a reputation as a permanent and supported by regular audiences who fill their theatres to high capacity houses. It has been the most expensive theatre in Sydney and is the longest running. One would have thought it was worthy of protection, given its size and reputation in international, than perhaps Australia's. Indeed, the Tate, which the Australia Council will be funding for majority consumption of activity in 1979.

Robert Hargrave has stated that the money can be taken and elsewhere and that a sub-committee will be set up in conjunction with the NSW Government to discuss alternative ways of financing and funding drama in NSW. But the immediate result will be that Sydney will be one of the company's loss, a sorry situation for the already under-employed pool of actors and technicians, and theatre goes. The drama company, which is a small one, is said to have provided Australia Council budgets across the boards, and unknown not that even less money will be available for the rest of the year. The Tate's success, this was not what the Council is looking for. In fact, in any case the likelihood of the kind of money needed to start a new company being found in the new future is almost nonexistent. As soon as possible in the Park Theatre have there, you can't create a new successful company overnight.

The Australia Council have decided that a loan has been made in the affairs of the Tate Theatre Company beyond which they may run, go but how and why that point has been reached appears not to have been properly thought out and certainly not discussed. A theatre company like any company, such as a machine, a certain level of success has to be maintained to keep itself going, to survive, to exist. The Australia Council have been the means by which the Tate has expanded on its present level and has applied to continue to operate. The Melbourne Theatre Company has done this, Newsworld and the State Theatre of South Australia are doing this also with the support and knowledge of the Australia Council. When will they go beyond the acceptable level and where is the next step to fall? All over the world, the organisations of state theatre companies have been given life by government funding bodies, and they are having to make responsible for the structures they have created. The Australia Council must take a deal of responsibility for creating the situation, one of at least reduced funding for one theatre, a proportion of Australian plays that would maintain a major theatre organisation and all of the few with an international name and all the few of localised company that have been through all the years in Australia.

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'?'QUOTES&QUERIES'?'



Joan Sutherland as and in *Morano*
Photo: William Morley

OLD FOR NEW

CHRISTOPHER HUNT, Director, Adelaide Festival.

"From all my first impressions of Australia are two surfaced which dominate all the others. This is the prevailing contrast between young and old, old and new — a contrast that despite its unremitting, seems to have a far greater significance here than anywhere else I know. It is this contrast, which one can also see in the extension of tradition and progress that I propose to take as the theme for the 1988 Adelaide Festival of Arts. It is a theme that will unify virtually all the arts elements of the Festival and will also involve and cater for all elements of the community. It is a theme that affects everyone in the community every day. Each of us, after all, has been a child and hopes to live to old age.

Approaches to the theme may include the best works of composers, artists, writers, dramatists etc. presented alongside their modern ones. The works of the old and the young; new and old aspects of Australia. The "problems" of old age and youth. Old and new worked on the theme, including commissioned works.

I will be present until mid-September finding out who and what is available and hope to have guidelines on that front when I return."

FRESH START IN NEWCASTLE

ROSS MCGREGOR, Hunter Valley Theatre Company.

"For me the Hunter Valley Theatre Company

is a new company. What's happened in the past, being an ensemble and rehearsal, is largely irrelevant. There is no company at the moment and what I believe there are actors, a director, stage manager and staff.

The kind of theatre I will be putting on will be people — in all its forms — from commissioned shows about Newcastle and the region to musicals. I'm not aware of any, I want music, warmth, laughter. There will be a lot of involvement with the community. I will be welcoming for all shows first in Newcastle — where support can come along, although audience will be stronger — and then in Sydney. I hope to be able to use equipment in the smaller roles, and perhaps for other work. There is an amazing amount of support, with an hundred members of the company, and the very generous donations for the theatre building that have come from people and companies. The two hundred new theatre should be the perfect size, modest, but if any of the shows is a huge success we can exceed its size or transfer it to somewhere larger. The building is now going ahead and the first season will open early in '79."

BIG LITTLE MAN

DAVID ALLEN

"Sara Lawall, the Canadian, has always fascinated me. In-known persons — his incredible idiosyncrasy — contrasts so very strongly with what one can gather about his professional dress and his personal rudiments. This is the main theme of *Great White Herd*.

The play is set against the realistic period of Sara's post Lawall and Hardy days when, for a time, he worked with an Australian singer and dancer I've called Kate. I've tried to show the clash of their minds and emotions through the background of their different national origins. As I put myself, instead here for seven years, I feel the kind of English/Australian cultural moments previously existing — in fact the predominant theme of most of my current writing."

The great figure of Jack McTavish the third character in the play, whose some ways acts as a kind of chorus, sums up for me all that is irrevocably everything in the music that makes it. He, like Sam, has for different reasons, a survivor Kate is a victim."

LA SCALA TO SYDNEY

AVA MURBLE, Publicity, Sydney Opera House.

"From August 4th to the end of September we have an exhibition commemorating the 200th Anniversary of La Scala Milan, which will be in the Exhibition Hall of the Opera House. It was

put together by La Scala's Theatre Museum and is travelling around the world, from here it goes on to America. The Director of La Scala's Museum, Gian Piero Tassinari is coming out here to supervise the mounting of the exhibition which will actually be done by Bill Pearson.

The exhibition is mainly devoted to art and costume designs over two hundred years from 1778 on. There aren't any actual costumes but there will be some sets and some marvelous posters advertising their operas. So we will be able to see their style and how it has changed over the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century."

ACME

CAROLINE HERRISON, Administrator.

"The Australia Contemporary Music Ensemble is now an integral part of Australia's musical life. In a short time, under the musical direction of Keith Blomfield, it has emerged with the Sydney Sinfonia Quartet and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, as Australia's leading performing ensemble.

In terms of concerts in the year's Adelaide Festival of the Arts drew from local and international cross sections of praise. Included in these programmes were ten Australian compositions, five of these five performances. The existence of this platform is important, as contemporary composition, particularly Australian works, has lacked a showcase of virtuous performers. Too often the acceptance by the public of 20th century music has been impeded by unsatisfactory performances. The concept that ACME has given has proved that contemporary music, together performed in a new music, is profitable to audiences.

The Ensemble will operate on a national and international level. Within Australia it will develop a lively regional programme together with creative educational projects for junior schools to tertiary level. It will perform workshops, lecture demonstrations and public concerts along the best of the 20th century repertoire including Australian compositions. By maintaining an extremely high standard of all that it undertakes, the Ensemble hopes to stimulate composers to write for the group.

Internationally, ACME plans to undertake one major overseas tour a year, introducing new Australian works to different countries in highly professional performances.

ACME has made one record — produced by Cherry Pie Records — which was the 1978 National Grassland.

The Australia Contemporary Music Ensemble gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, and the Music Board of the Australia Council."

INDIGESTIBLE WORLD WAR II

BRYON WILLIAMS, Stage Door Theatre Restaurant in Melbourne.

"The idea of theatre with food has always interested me and suddenly finding myself working in a domestic restaurant situation, I began toying with the idea. I and my partner Barbara Ramsey, believed that it should be possible to write and produce a show suitable for a theatre and incorporate it into a venue where people could enjoy a good meal, a glass of wine and so back and enjoy a show without having to rush from restaurant to theatre. With this in mind we conceived, wrote and produced *Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major*.

After several disappointments we eventually found a venue which, although not ideal for our purposes, had a lot of things in its favour. It was a fairly large restaurant room adjoining The Pomegranate Restaurant, Queens Road, Melbourne. The location was ideal, being just on the fringe of the city proper, with plenty of off street parking, its own entrance and foyer, facilities and toilet facilities.

Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major is a nostalgia trip through the Second World War period. The show commences with the declaration of war by the then Prime Minister, R. G. Menzies and through news flashes, sketches, songs and dances, we travel through the war years covering such areas as Dunkirk, the London Blitz, invasion worries, Pearl Harbour, US / Australian relations, African desert campaigns, the home front, letters and parcels to the boys. New Guinea, the Asian Pacific and finally on to the Victory celebrations. There are one hundred songs from the period played by a three piece band and sung to the vast company Gary Down, Val Mills, Suzanne Dudley and Neil Downer.

After supper which is served during the Victory celebrations, the audience are allowed to dance until midnight to the sounds of Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey and other bands of the era.

As for the future, one would hope that it is possible to do all types of theatre in such a venue. Not only musical comedy/revue like the present show, but dramas, one man theatre, children's theatre as well as any kind of theatre where people can relax in an informal atmosphere and enjoy good theatre and good food without rushing through their meal to see in a conventional type of theatre with no comfort in their pants."

PRESENTING NEW TOURS

LEE CURRIE

"As Productions Manager for the Arts Council of New South Wales for nearly two years I have had the pleasure of presenting many excellent artists to thousands of appreciative school children. Unfortunately I have also had to reject many fine acts for Arts Council touring as there is a limit to the number

of acts one can present in one afternoon. For this reason, I have decided to organize tours privately and to reduce some new faces as well as some of the more familiar and popular artists who have previously toured for the Arts Council.

Initially I will be touring shows to schools, but later intend promoting concerts and theatrical productions of a larger scale. I will also be making myself available on a freelance basis for the planning and production of shows, and in particular country touring. The first two shows I will be doing for schools will be the *Mudra Main Theatre* (Infants and Primary schools in the Metropolitan area November and December) and *Make Jackson Infants* (Primary and Secondary in the N.S.W. Regions and South Coast districts during October, November and December).

BEST DRESS RATES IN SYDNEY

MICHAEL JAMES, ARTY Costume Department.

The Arts Costume Hire Department has over ten thousand costumes and is constantly increasing our stock and expanding the department to give the public a better selection. We've got a very good range of period and fancy dress, and we can make costumes for hire or for order. If you're a *Trudy* member, it's cheap, a school or an amateur group you get a special discount, but we have the cheapest rates in Sydney anyway.

We have for fancy dress, parties, drama groups, professional productions, TV and newspaper commercial TV shows, films, children and fashion parades. But we're also always involved in purchasing costumes from other productions and films. We have all the costumes from *Power in the Heart* for instance. We also buy original pieces from the late originalists and maintain a strictest list payable on work done and for reference work. We have a good reference library on costume and research facilities and drama groups and schools are always welcome to go on a tour of the costume."

NO RIGHT TO SUBSIDY

LAUREN OWEN, Chairman, People's Theatre Foundation.

No one likes to see a theatre company in trouble — particularly when you are in the business yourself. However, People's Theatre Foundation is compelled to support the Australia Council Theatre Board's courageous decision on refusing to continue to subsidise the Old Tote."

"The company must realise that our right to subsidy. Public funding must be earned and sustained. Every company must be judged regularly on its merits as there is a tendency by subsidised theatre to lay any art for the market to develop commercial and to ensure immediate sales that have little artistic relevance. The theatre

(Continued on page 48)



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I was asked by many people, on my arrival in Australia, how long it would be staying. My answer — "Three weeks" — brought incredulous stares. One girl, who studies Japanese theatre and is to me, "You're planning on seeing the whole country in only three weeks?"

When one has given oneself over to the better-shower world of Japanese journalism, three weeks to see one country's theatre seems like all the time in the world. But Australia proved to be the exception to that. I couldn't quite believe the distances. And time seemed to pass with a quiet composure of its own. I didn't see a single person huffing or, for that matter, putting through a single crowd, as in Japan. (In Tokyo virtually everybody rushes every where for no reason at all.) For any number of reasons, here was a country that was truly Japan's opposite number.

If I was to approach Australian theatre as well, I would have to begin by withholding judgment on the basis of a Japanese sensibility to time and space. Besides that, Australia seemed different from both Europe and America too. In Asia, it was not exactly Asia. It appeared to me as a Fourth World, an independent domain, with its own sense of time and space.

I was very happy that the country offered so much that I had to see, far more than my expectations of it. I saw plays after play in Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, sometimes up to three plays a day, and I never tired of it. The standard of production was always high.

I should point out that I was fortunate to meet a large number of great people of ability, as authentic as Brecht: Philip Parsons, Martin Thomson, Roger Dobson, Len Ruck, Peter Kemm, Ron Blair, Dorothy Hewitt, Ray Lawler, Alan Bass, Ken Sharrman, and Rob Page. They addressed themselves to my children's questions with the greatest care, sensitivity, and patience. They gave me valuable advice at every turn. I felt a warmth and an attractiveness in both the people of Australian theatre and the theatre itself. These three weeks were very happy ones for me! I felt I was at a festival of the spirit here.

Now, I don't think so highly of myself to presume that I could draw any concrete conclusions from such a short stay in this country. When I go to come at another time and see other productions, I would no doubt have a different view of things. What I write here are temporary statements on my part and nothing more: fleeting impressions, if you will.

First I was struck by the Japanese of the beauty of Australian theatre. Australian theatre too has both feet on the ground. It is a no-frills theatre. It seemed to me to be a theatre that has chosen a concrete simplicity over superficial showiness. It has not strayed from the essential elements or pretended to a technique-for-its-own-sake technology, a transient state at best. Australian theatre is a theatre of healthy balance, not carried away by violent neo-dramatic outbursts of dogmatic self-righteousness. To put it another way, Australian theatre has as its backdrop an artistic sensibility that comes from

A Theatre Opened To The Future

Senda Akihiko

One of Japan's leading theatre critics assesses Australian theatre

naturally it is a civic theatre.

Where does this stability come from? Probably from the solid base of a large consensus as it is reflected in people's minds from a society that is built on peaceful progress and is comparatively well-off and free of strains. So much of modern theatre has entered the cul de sac of technique for its own sake, an excessive technology without purpose. That theatre is theatre for its own sake. It may be intelligent, but it is largely empty. Australian theatre, it seems to me, has reached this kind of theatre before it could take hold.

I was surprised to find that the majority of playwrights who are active on the front line of theatre were in their thirties, and that the "new wave" had come, with them riding it, during the second half of the 1960's. There is an intriguing similarity in this with the Japanese situation. In Japan, the so-called little theatre movement of anti-establishment writers and directors arose — Kenji Hirao, Kazuo Tachikawa, Ritsuyaku Mizuno, Sato Mikoto, Tetsuya Sato, Hajime Yutaka. These people, and others, re drew the map of Japanese theatre.

But one quickly sees the differences between the two "new waves". The Japanese theatre of the sixties was one which set out to negate a modern drama based on psychology and realism. It was an avant-garde experimental movement which is still a minority movement in the world of Japanese theatre today.

So I was naturally surprised to see that most of the same generation of playwrights and directors in their thirties here in Australia were writing popular pieces which were widely accepted and enjoyed by society, dramas that had a mature technique in them and a traditional point of departure, and that their people were already successful in the middle areas of their society. The Japanese theatre world has a thick layer of old people running it at the top. It is a theatre that is deeply polarised in its value system. And it doesn't have an open-ended structure as does Australian society.

So that as it may most Australian playwrights are wary of these techniques, which is a careful and meticulous one. Moreover, it is a technique that uses means which have a high rate of success. A typical example of this is Alex Buzz's *Melbourne Reef* which I saw in Melbourne. It was a "well-made play" full of ready wit

and a cosmopolitan, refined sense. Alex Buzz's direction was skilful, and there was life on stage, and I was impressed by the playwright's ability.

However, whilst the play did entertain the audience very much, it was not the kind of piece that contrasts an audience in a form way. I prefer the playwright's early work which is much more interesting, plays like *Norm* and *Almond and Walnut*, which I have only read, however. At least in those plays there is a mystery, a darkness that cannot be fully elucidated.

That is why I felt that, while there was a high overall level in production and a more maturity — and I fully value these qualities, there was one thing lacking: most of the plays I saw lacked wonder.

This may partly be the prejudice of a person who has seen too much Japanese experimental work from a theatre that gets all its power over to supervening reason, a theatre that drives on the destructivity of the spectacle and the element of the unexpected in the plot. It may be that I am ill-informed really, but I feel that was only because I have seen so little of Australia's theatre. Whatever, it does appear to me that Australian theatre, in the long run, will take its form from the gaudy discord that exists between the representational maximum of people like Alex Buzz and David Williamson on the one hand and neo-dramatic anti-conformists like Dorothy Hewitt, with her poetic dramas, Roger Dobson with his social criticism and satire, and directors like Ken Sharrman and Ron Crumpton, on the other.

This theatre would be different apart from that of either Europe or Asia. It would be the original product of this unique continent. It would be a theatre that reflects the complexities of a multi-racial state, not restrained by tradition; supported by a largeness of approach and no limits on time and space, facing more than anything the future and opened not wide a theatre of possibility and about dance.

Australian theatre is part of the scene of Asian theatre, yet in many ways is such a contrast to Japanese theatre. We cannot but be deeply impressed by it.

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Music Theatre in Melbourne

On September 1st at the Union Theatre, University of Melbourne, the Victorian State Opera is to open its second season of contemporary music theatre.

Two of the works, *The Apologies of Barry Anderson* (text by Murray Copeland) to the music of Barry Cunningham, and *Jim: An Innocent Fable in Seven Deadly Arts and Four other* written by Jack Hibbard with music by Martin Ford, have been specially commissioned by the company. The third work of the season is *Eliza Fraser Sings*, lyrics by Barbara Mackinnon and music by Peter Sculthorpe, which was recently produced in Sydney.

With this season of music dramas the Victorian State Opera can now rightfully claim to be the only opera company in the country to present new works by Australian composers and writers on a regular basis. Not only that, the company views the production and presentation of such works

as "one of its major functions and achievements". All praise to them.

Barry Anderson tells the tale of a convict chained to a rock in Sydney Harbour after becoming violent due to a head injury sustained in the battle of Navarino. On his rock, like a modern Prometheus, he becomes a watchstationer. The piece takes up his story after he had been rescued and taken to Norfolk Island, where visitors draw fables of monstrosities from him as he trends towards

Jack Hibbard's *Jim* is a modern morality tale described as "Miesnerian, hedonistic, mysterious and thought provoking". It takes the lid off conventional social attitudes by juxtaposing continually and satirically, images of vice and virtue. Martin Ford worked with the writer for the Peers Factory's production of *The Overcoat*, an old Paul Hingston the director, Evelyn Krupp and Jan Ferrel are in the cast.

In *Eliza Fraser Sings*, Margot Cory plays the hell maid Mrs Franks inside the Shakespeare booth site set up in Hyde Park, Sydney where she told the story of her long ordeal on what is now known as Fraser Island to the hands of the



Sarah Evelyn Krupp

shortly.

The season runs for five nights between September 1st and 5th.

Theatre in Schools with Andrew Ross

Joan Ambrose

A winter's morning, a school with the sounds and smells of a school. The classes nostalgic of strange past, will join shoes and clapping etc. And the year twelve are asleep. They have been herded into a rather cramped reading room to see a play. They give the impression they're asleep. He doing maths, or better still not being at school at all. Suddenly a teacher breaks into their talk. Tina Adèle Lewis in May walks onto the acting area, shortly followed by John Maynard as Joe, and the play *The Miners* by Brian Frost begins. It is a play about being in love, about exams, leaving school and being pregnant. Eighty minutes later, a group of kids walk out of that room, moved, astonished, each separate, each wrapped in a response that they do not wish to break, to great but brief, their regularity with the play.

All of that is something new to students in Western Australia. Director Andrew Ross was appointed in January 1977 to set up TIE in the West, under the auspices of the National Theatre Company. There was no money and a big job to do. But Andrew was very clear in his mind where he was led to go and what he wanted to do. In this he has been supported by both Aarne Norrme and Stephen Barry, executive Directors of the National Theatre. The result has been outstandingly successful. There is now a waiting list of schools who are asking for the Theatre in Education team, and schools now look towards them for the play.

Andrew's background is as a Director of Student Theatre at Monash and some years with the MTC on a freelance basis. A fortuitous accidental meeting with Aarne Norrme gave him the opportunity to join the National Theatre and to put into



National Theatre, Perth's TIE team: Igor Sas (Actor), Andrew Ross (Director), David Kennedy (Actor), Ross Cole (Actor), Richard Tulloch (Actor) and Lesley Griffin (Actor).

practice his convictions about what kind of theatre should be played in schools.

But the first problem was money. Initially, the plays chosen were two-handers. The TIE company at the beginning had to largely run on bare effort. But the response to these first plays Capital in Transit and *Winters* was so good that the Schools Commission funded *Andrew* by David Thring for primary schools. A film of the performance has been made so that schools not yet involved can see the type of work the TIE team presents.

Subsequent funding from the WA Arts Council and the Australia Council has allowed the Company to develop, and to realise Andrew Ross's initial belief that TIE companies work best with a centre in the team. Richard Tulloch has now been with the company since the beginning of this year and two new plays *And March* and *Requiem* — a word play for primary

schools — have emerged as a result.

The guiding philosophy behind Andrew's work is a commitment to bringing theatre to schools, in a way that relates to the child's complete experience and not just to curriculum needs, presenting plays that are both entertaining but with a depth and pride content that reward the children's understanding and awareness.

It has been a busy period for Andrew Ross. In addition to the mounting demands of forming TIE in Western Australia he also has some critically acclaimed Greenroom productions to his credit, such as *Ashe* and *Going Home*.

He never imagined that he would come West. But it has been a rather marvelous, almost fantastic, experience he says. There are so many opportunities and a fresh and vigorous approach here, that make the efforts of the last eighteen months very worthwhile.

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

On reading Margaret Wall's article "No Culture Comes Out of Empressment", it strikes me that readers who will get the impression that Fortune Theatre Company is critical of the Canberra Theatre Trust for wanting us to stage our productions seasons in the foyer of the Canberra Theatre, rather than the Playhouse.

In fact that is not so: we would be pleased to have that use of the Playhouse in the future — but only at such time as we have sufficient funding to enable us to make full use of the available facilities.

We are a newly formed company, gradually building a reputation for excellence in its art, and by necessity keeping our expenditure as low as possible. The foyer of the theatre is ideal for us as we are able to use conventionalised formations, sets, lighting etc. We believe that this policy is one of the reasons for the success of our last two seasons.

We have received the utmost co-operation from Terry Vaughan, and the Theatre Trust in general. And are now in the process of preparing four more plays, to run from September 11 to in October 81.

In his article Mr Wall has not mentioned, in fact used our statement out of context, with the understanding of handicapping Fortune Theatre Company with a group of people in the A.C.T. who feel they have a grievance against the Theatre Trust.

Yours faithfully,
Pat Hutchinson

**Fortune Theatre Company
A.C.T.**

Dear Editor,

It's about time I re-established correspondence with you and resumed you of my continued interest in EA. There is no interest in the way, which is shared by many people in Canada, continues to be made on the quality and breadth of the journal, and I think there worth pressing along.

John Ransom was in town last Spring, visiting relatives and theatre people in Canada from coast to coast. He made a great impression here, his downy relaxed personality did more for the success of his stay than the initial article in the Australian High Commission in Ottawa at Richardson, a complete photo was complete. John gave a relevant, live performance of the last Hunting anecdote from *The Floating World*. It was the highlight of an evening scheduled otherwise for poetry recitation. John Ransom's being in Canada was the result of his winning the Canadian Australian Literary Prize which he actually won, I think, two or three years ago. Much

interest in Ransom now exists here, and about theatre in Australia generally. The National Theatre in Ottawa (NAT) is possibly going to perform *The Floating World* as part of this season in 1979.

Another very good of miscellany is about Australian films and the way they are marketed over here. First, I've never seen *Phone in Sleeping Room* released in Canada, neither in regular distribution nor limited showing. Recently, *The Devil's Playground* was shown at a large city (I think last cinema under the one roof downtown house) it was for a short week and was hopelessly billed as "An Australian horror movie" — and they moved home in the same way the audience was. Another one is *Prisoner* — from a David Williamson script. I believe — which became *Jack Freeman* gives him where it was released in a blood & guts roller I lack. I gave you already knew in North America for an individual who knows in his heart rather than his brain — what my creature? I think discussions are likely to take a risk with Australian films in Canada. Of course, this is understandable while not feasible, *And God Bless My Name* was given conventional release because a local Donner Hopper is in it. But then, I wonder why Rachel Roberts (at least known here for her role in a Tony Randall account don't qualify *Phone in Sleeping Room* for North American release. Perhaps it has been shown in the states, I don't know. At least one would hope that our local Festival organizers would invite us to it.

I am presently attending the Stratford Festival, from which I hope a submission will be forthcoming to you. All the best for continued success with the journal.

Yours sincerely

**Berry O'Connor
Canadian Correspondent**

Dear Sir,

We were somewhat taken aback at Ray Stuckey's column in the last issue in which he referred to our "selfish unco-operation" in relation to our use of *The Theatre* and *All That Jazz*.

It is a fact that the *Theatre* company approached as a few weeks prior to their time to set it was practical to get out of their contract, but when we explained that we had already spent about \$10,000 in initial preparation and advertising for the cost they agreed to proceed with their contract.

Our relations with the company began during and after the last have always been most cordial and professional, so we wonder how Ray could have formed such a distorted view of the situation prior allowing for the fact that his

columnists put whoppers and rumours ahead of facts.

Sincerely
**Don Mackay
Director, Victorian Arts Council**

Dear Sir,

I regret that Terry Vaughan's article in previous and cannot reply to Margaret Wall's article on the Canberra Theatre Centre personally. However I would like to make the following comments.

The Canberra Theatre Trust's principle responsibility under its Ordinance is the management of the Theatre Centre — that is basically to provide for occupancy of its venues and to maintain them to the original standards set. The operational needs of the Theatre Centre is derived in fact — 53% from revenue and 47% from subsidy.

Secondary to this function the Ordinance requires the Trust to promote and encourage the arts. However the financial structure set up by the Government did not allow for the continuous funding of these aims in 1963 the Trust was given \$1000,000, non-replenishable, which it was used and expended and it was finally depleted in 1978.

The main source for management all funds over the last nine years has been a steadily replenished grant from the Australian Council. This has been used to bring all types and styles of productions to Canberra which for financial reasons would not otherwise be seen here. Also, to encourage and support events originating from within the community itself. From July 1971 to June 1978 we presented 22 different seasons including the First Festival's production of "A Search of the Imagination" with Max Gailor, and the Fortune Theatre's production season in the foyer of the Canberra Theatre.

By the way the Fortune Theatre wants to play in the foyer but we are planning another season in September/October. Also, the Agate Company is currently playing a four season at well.

Usage and attendance did decline from 1973 to 1977 in company with the general economy and this will extend throughout Australia. I cannot speak for the economy but I am happy to note that both usage and attendance in the Canberra Theatre Centre increased in 1977/78 to 304 weeks and 221,663 attendance.

As regards "Would Goshawks in Buenos Aires" by Roger Pooley we were approached by Goshawk Productions to perform the play for a season at the Playhouse. We suggested that it would do better in the conventions of the

[Continued next page]

Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



Sydney may be ahead of London with its production of *Orlando* but it looks ultimately as though the Sydney cast will be bigger in England. On November 11 the Orson Society will be holding its annual dinner while part of tonight will be spent when Hamilton, who toured around England in the play for many years. Then George Charels is due to sit with Roy D'Amico in a completely new stage version with plans to head to prison; the Broadway version we're seeing was *Orlando Stump*, successful for the role. Frank Langella (who's been playing it on Broadway) is

due in London in October to star in the film version with Lord Olivier as Van Helman. And of course Ken Russell is to direct yet another film version.

Here there's a possibility *Glynn Johns* will star in a Broadway version of *The Film World* and *Alfred Jones*. *Lee Litzman* will probably be taking singing lessons while she's in Australia, preparing for the Broadway lead in *Richard Rodgers' Mame*. There's talk all over again of *James Stewart* coming here to play in *Orlando*. And the search for a lead for *Don Thew* in *The Red Before Christmas* will continue.

The multi-talented Nick Knight, having made the transition of the MTC's *Elmore* with Frank Whelan, has followed that with the transition of *The Servant of Two Masters* with Ron Blair for the South Australia Theatre Company. I am told by a quite reliable source that a desire to establish for the future a Theatre Station that she will quite likely be another all Playwright. Showing of *Harold Gordon's* looks for her role in *Orlando* is likely to be sought for priority to the TV company.

Apparently someone told for Roy Livermore's new show in *Servant of Two Masters*, rapidly familiar. Was one of his Playwrights review years ago called that? Understood it was his

Levin who told some Producer. *Patrick Macnee* would be the best possible lead for the Australian production of *Death Trap*. Am saying an unknown Australian will be cast in the other leading role and make a big impact. Quite long. Last time "America is where I came my home. Britain is where I play my art." The *Green Glade of the Age* recently lost a major play in *And the Playwright* by Sean O'Casey. Confusion being caused in Adelaide by *Wall Cherry's* newly formed Australian Stage Company is another separation in the city is called *The Stage Company*.

Those who can recall *Frank Thew's* *Arrow Theatre* days will be startled at the shock in London in early five of actor-director *Frederick Warley*. After a period of promising work in the New Zealand there to be come to Melbourne in 1950 and during his time there directed *Amelia Hamlet* in *Two Trees in the River*. *John Hamlet* in *Larger Than Life* and *Ralph Fennell's* *The Square Ring*. His most recent achievement was taking over from *Alan Webb* in the New York production of *The Anglerfish* and acting in the three-episode with *Ralph Richardson* and *Celia Johnson* following the with direction of a musical cast of the same play.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONT'D

compos and the Director agreed. However, we refused to support it with a guarantee of \$800. The offer was the money was accepted and we still think it was the right course to take.

Canberra is actually a city of 200,000 and the Theatre Centre has to endeavour to provide a varied diet for the entire population. However, the Canberra Theatre Trust, which was created the outcome of the Inquiry into Drama in the A.C.T. (in which two of its members are listed) as recommendations only will influence the future role of the Theatre Centre in regard to drama.

For the 1978 calendar year, our correspondence funds totalled \$12,800 and this doesn't go very far. The Trust would certainly like to do more and is making representations for a larger sum next year.

Yours sincerely
D.J. Farrell
Chairman

CANBERRA THEATRE TRUST

You did however mention all the *Stage* awards. Not was I all that put out that last September you didn't publish the cost of my new play *The Prisoner of the Moon* (produced by Canberra Rep). But then on reflection I thought it was to point to that the people who have come up to me in my work will know that I'm alive and well and living gratefully in Canberra.

Yours faithfully,
Mike Giles,
Fisher, ACT

Dear Sir

Last month the Company of Players, a contracted part of the State Theatre of South Australia, held one of its regular meetings. It was an extraordinary meeting, in as much as discussion of the workshop, script and lighting design staff were there to discuss the appointment of the new artistic director.

It seemed a working party to draft a report of the proposals presented at the meeting and that report will be presented to the board by our representatives.

The Company of Players has a representative on the board, with full voting powers.

Enclosed is a

A blue print for other companies.

Yours faithfully
Robin Bowering
State Company of South Australia

APOLGIES

Apologies to Ray Stanley, who wrote the review of *Electric* in the August issue, not of course, David Parker, who took the photos.



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Dear Sir

Wishing only that my plays get produced and that I continue to develop as a playwright. I would like that. I am glad that you failed to mention in your April. I am glad that I was awarded the National Critics' Circle going for the ACT.

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La Stupenda



Joan Sutherland as Norma.

Mastery or Myth?

A personal assessment of opera's superstar by Greg Curran.

Listen to a batch of "Stupenda" fans, and you'll quickly come to believe expensive singing began and ended with Maria Callas. The old refrain, Callas let singing, Sutherland for the vocal studio, is still being worked, still passing for thoughtful cogitation in certain dress circles.

Which is a pity, because apart from the quaint notion that the staging and acting of opera can be effectively separated, the distinction is hardly fair to either lady. To those whose minds are not closed to a broad view of what vocal beauty can be, Madame Callas was, more often than not, the voice beautiful, while our Joan, hailed as "great" so long and so routinely on the basis of her labored virtuosity, may have, on the strength of her recent Sydney Norma, and I suspect a deepening awareness of what the tragic heroine in general (and Norma in particular) is all about, here in us her to be a more complete artist, to be really great.

One prime fact should immediately be made clear. Expression in singing, and particularly opera, was always sought after. Berangère de Bacilly, one of the first French theoreticians of singing, divided voices into two categories, the beautiful ones and the good ones. The good ones are those which, without any natural gifts, are nevertheless capable, thanks to technique,

of expressing all a performance requires. The naturally beautiful ones, on the other hand, content to wallow in their own beauty, rarely produce anything of significance and are often boring.

Forward to Paris in the 1830's and Vincenzo Bellini, great composer of *La Sonnambula*, *I Puritani*, and *Norma*. Bellini's friend, Ferdinand Hiller, has left impressions of musical evenings, at which Bellini and Chopin were present. On one of these occasions, Hiller tells us, Bellini sang some of his own compositions "in a voice less full of sound than of feeling" (my italics). Goodness, Patsy, inventors of the composer, the *diva* who created the diverse roles of Norma and Sonnambula, had, according to the critic Chopin, a voice that was, originally anyway, "hard, uneven and unattractive". Grove's Musical Dictionary states that "her voice was not absolutely free from superfluities but the individuality of her impersonations and the peculiar and penetrating expression of her singing made the several critic forget any faults of production as the sympathy and emotion she irresistibly created".

Another Norma, the "Tabouret" Mathilde contemporary of Patti and Bellini, and the singer to whom, in our own day, Maria Callas has been most com-

pared, was an artist of great presence and force: but, again according to Grove, her charm "seems to have lain chiefly in the peculiar colour and unusual extent of her voice, and in her exuberant temperament...

that her voice was not listless either in quality or in uniformity seems certain". Unlike Groves, another contemporary, a gentler type of singer by all accounts, with apparently more conventional (and "perfect") vocal resources, nevertheless appears to have stressed her expression at all costs. She was the first Elvira in Bellini's last opera *I Puritani* (in London (1835) the critic of *The Spectator* pays tribute to her acting in the role: "In the heroine being who stands before us with dark and endless eyes, dark and mysterious features, and a voice hollow, tremulous, hoarse, not a vestige remains of the lovely and sparkling creature we had seen an instant before".

Composers other than Bellini preferred dramatic truth to some spurious vocal perfection. Verdi, for instance, who stated that "his" Lady Macbeth should have a voice "dark, inflexed and hollow... a dramatic quality" Richard Wagner said of Wilhelmsson-Schroder Devrient, the great Learner of Fichte's, master of Senta in *The Flying Dutchman*, First Venus in

"She needs Franco Zeffirelli again to direct her and Tullio Serafin to come back from the dead."



Joan Sutherland in Lakme.

(Pears: William Mortes)

Paradox was "Because we have celebrated you as a singer, I have been asked whether your voice was really exceptional (the question implying that this was the essential point). If I were to be asked this question today I would give roughly this reply: no, she had no voice, but she knew so well how to handle her breathing and thereby to create, with so marvellous a command that the true test of a woman, that one thought no longer of singing but of voice".

That's rather a good description of Callas as well, and indeed the conductor Tullio Serafin discovered, who was also a major influence on Rosa Ponselle (great Norma of the twentieth and an early 'mentor' of Miss Sutherland herself, has echoed Wagner in his comments on the Italian tenor Aureliano Pertini in contemporary of Gilda: "I never actually noticed that Pertini had a voice I don't know why, but evening after evening I have only heard the voices of Pavarotti and Lohengrin, of Des Grieux and Edgardo, and so on. I've heard as many voices as there are parts in his repertoire." Which may be just another way of saying what Ernest Newman, the great English critic, said about Ponselle's Norma: "Miss Ponselle proves to us that the finest singing, given a good voice to begin with, comes from the constant play of a fine mind on the inner meaning of the music".

Another Norma, she may have been the greatest of all, Lilli Lehmann, born of the century soprano with a phenomenal repertoire including Isolde and Brunnhilde (in that respect, at least, she was the Callas of her day). Yet, according to the Viennese critic Hanslick, "Nature denied

her penetrating strength andamp; richness of voice... but endowed her with a personality pervaded not only for the range but particularly fragile and noble color." One might almost say Joan Sutherland is Lilli Lehmann in reverse. From the beginning of her international career the voice was a great one, with subject to few limits in the matter of top range. Remarkably (discreetly) handled with consummate ease) and quality. The trouble was that from the outset she hardly seemed to have much temperament affinity with the tragic heroines she portrayed. For a start she was monumentally placed onstage. And the problem was not confined to physical acting, of this vocal singer. It was more fundamental. "What do I mean?"

Well, at the first place, while her tone was not blarneyed like the electric stop, twenty per centimeters of 19th century French opera, it was light, and though bright, which was usually attractive, it was soft grained which was often a drawback. Moreover there was a tendency toward a single coloration, a monochromatic effect. Though the voice was clearly capable of darker colors, it did not naturally favour the deeper shades. Compared to the dark "mysterious" beauty of the voice of Rosa Ponselle (identified by Sir Thomas in The Grand Tradition as part voice, roses, passion, white, cream), the delicate colorations and the light and shade of Montserrat Caballé, the vigor and attack of one such Norman as Arrie Corengini and Elena Souleles (paid for alas in short stature) not to mention the vibrance, majesty and supreme nobility of Maria Callas (even at times of great

vocal stress), La Sutherland seemed in a word — colorless.

At the same time whether by nature or habit, or a deliberate intent to "cover" at all events she seemed to have some difficulty in proper production of the voice, in that area largely free of the falsetto and fluency of singing — i.e. the middle voice. Here the following were sometimes lacking, either singly or in combination a feeling for pure line a forward impetus, even stream of tone clearly less pleasing readiness and clarity of imagination the ability to sing simply and sound natural. Considerations such as these are often of paramount importance in what is, after all, the vocal heartland of singing. In this respect they were sometimes curiously lacking.

This meant that, as well as about being colorless, the singing was wordless as well. The mostly muted, bubble gummy effect of this odd voice production precluded a performance of vocalism. And without clear diction there could be little in the way of vocal acting, expression, communication, drama. Over the years as Lucia, Amena, Elvira, Violetta (in 1965 that really was interminable), Marguerite, Desdemona et al. the singer always seemed pretty much the same. All that changed were the costumes. Performances I've seen were usually misdirected by the physical beauty of the vocal instrument (something which, however, quickly runs out of interest) plus fantastic boasts of virtuosity at the top of the range (being also of a limited limitation, they seem out-acting their welcome). Was Sutherland then doomed forever to be the "horrid" voice of the 17th Century. Barely previously

"The singer always seemed pretty much the same. All that changed were the costumes."



Joan Sutherland in *The Merry Widow*

Photo: William Healey

moment, one of those voices "content to wait in their beauty"?

In London in 1967 the diva sang Norma for the first, I think, of two series of performances in that city to date (the other was in 1970). Harold Rosenblatt, *Editor of Opera Magazine*, said this: "Not only were there long stretches in the opera which were boring, in which Miss Sutherland just did not rest one's attention... but this was the kind of performance which must surely have given the impression to those who did not know the opera that it is not a particularly good piece, and that Belina was not a dramatic composer."

Rosenblatt's words are of more than routine interest in Sydney 1978. The critics have barely mentioned the *Figliani* incidents in the libretto and the music; that the opera has for a long time been buried (which is correct), that the piece is hackneyed, that the production is at best bad, to my mind, is certainly a bad omen and so on and so forth. Anything to avoid saying something obvious to a child, that any bandstand felt with Norma is more likely to lie at the feet of the Great Goddess herself, most likely to arise from a lack of commitment, concerning interpretation from the opera's central figure. Nothing like this was suggested. Miss Sutherland, a natural titaness, has been, as always, joined with local superstition. Can that diminish be for all?

Yet Montserrat Caballé, another famed practitioner of Norma, got pointed in some quarters for the dramatic defects in her recent performance (in *Carina*, Gardel). The critic of *The Sunday Times* (London) said: "I made the mistake of first seeing Norma with Callas in her blinding prime —

a standard of dramatic and musical intelligence and commitment compared with which her successors at Covent Garden have come nowhere. Caballé, unlike Sutherland, at least gives a semblance of the great moods of passion and pathos that are at stake; but, until the final scene, her singing in the big moments had little of Sutherland's great accomplishment of indeed of her own, while its lack of involvement and purpose made the recitatives seem interminable."

Well that's one critic's view, based, one supposes, on Sutherland's case, on the memory of those 1967 and 1970 performances. Despite what I've said about the Sutherland voice, despite the styles of bel canto in the Sydney performance, I think Miss Sutherland, (whose Norma has become a real curate's egg) would make a much stronger impression in London now. Her local efforts show a much more thoughtful singer, an artist coming to grips with her position as never before. There is a clarity in the recitatives, a feeling for phrases, an overall authority which bodes well. Perhaps, at fifty two, the singer no longer feels so confident about her top (though she has few worries on that count) and has other priorities. Perhaps the newness her goal as a singing actress. Whatever, she has compared with (and almost) the centre of her voice. Her singing of *Coro Divo* was lovely, the way touching on the notes with the children, had a go at singing at her level, the *Storling* Roman provincial Polkone, and tried her usual manning on the string of great numbers that make up the last act. Thus *Al Mio Amore* (in which Norma has Polkone in her power) was gripping, *Quel Cor Tremato* (in

which she reveals her selfless level singing, and the finale, in which the mighty Polesine goes to her death, appropriately so.

But, and it is a big but, does she yet command the role with her whole being? — those wet patches of foggy and underfed singing, a lot that was tentative, too much stop-go in the physical acting (she needs Franco Zeffirelli again to direct her and Tullio Serafin to come back from the dead and conduct one of the great expansive performances). The whole evening lacked an overriding feeling of inevitability. A truly great Norma should appear to be possessed, might as well say, by the mob. Maybe Joan Sutherland, who has never seemed so much at home on stage as now, soon will be. I hope so, for I would like to really like her, to be completely satisfied for once.

As Harold Rosenblatt also said "The great Normas of operatic history have, to a greater or lesser extent all been great singing actresses, mistress of dramatic declamation and outstanding personae — Lilla Lehmann, Rosa Ponselle, Maria Callas." Will Joan Sutherland join the august group? I doubt it, but she has surpassed me this time, and may again. In 1972, in a farewell to the students of a master class at the Juillard School New York, she has Maria Callas said "The only thanks I want is *fiction, feeling, and experience*." Will "our" diva ever be able to say that? Perhaps. Time will tell in the meantime, constant affirmations and reaffirmations of her "greatness" by the Australian press are the point, and are hardly conducive to an atmosphere in which art can truly flourish.



Wal Cherry looks at the aims and uses of 'political' theatre

When we were rehearsing *The Three-penny Opera* for New Opera, over the State Opera of South Australia, in late November and December 1973, some momentous political events overtook the Australian people. The Governor-General sacked the Whitlam Government and by European standards we ought to have been in political chaos. The fact that we were not, disturbed 'the left' and cultured 'the right'. The effect on the company as a whole was exactly this, although the left protested valiantly and the right tended to remain quiet. John Willett and I thought we would take advantage of the situation to make a point with local overtones. We had already placed the play in an Australian social-political context and now seized on the opportunity to flex our political muscles, have some fun and perhaps demonstrate the spirit of Brecht. We brought the text back closer to the original meaning which Brecht, by the widest stretch of his imagination, could ever have expected to refer directly to life.

You will recall that *The Threepenny Opera* ends when the hero-villain Macheath is reprieved as he stands on the gallows. A messenger arrives from the Queen (King in our version) and informs with due pomp Macheath's staid mistress. We thought there was an easily made political point in their conversation and John Willett made it with a few deft strokes of the translator's pen. Presumably:

Dear audience, we now are coming to
The point where we must hang him by
the neck

Because it is the Christian thing to do
Proving that men must pay for what
they take

But as we want to keep our fingers clean
And you are people we can't risk
offending

We thought we'd better do without this scene
And substitute instead a different
ending

Why hang Macheath? We know that
men are all

For crime as long as it is sane and legal
So let's order this to the Governor-
General

And may his answer to us be Vice Regal.

A Governor-General, respondent in
appropriate phrase, dropped from the
text and sang

I bring a special order from our beloved
King to have Captain Macheath set at
liberty forthwith — all crime — as it's
for the commonwealth, and turned to the
beneficial penance. Cheere The cause
of Macheath, likewise a person of ten
thousand pounds, to be let in freedom
until his death. Cheere. To any brutal

couple present His Majesty bids me to
convey his pleasant good wishes.

The Chorus sang

Injustice should be spared from
persecution
Soon it will freeze to death for it is cold
Think of the thousands and the black
confusion

Which in the vale of tears we all behold
And the moral was drawn.

If the audience got the point it displayed
manners unknown. The company
remained as it was. No Liberal votes got
upset at having to perform this kind of
thing. The aesthetic and theatrical values
of the piece were enhanced and we left a
little smug about our relevance. We'd done
our bit.

There is a sense in which all theatre is
politics and it can certainly be judged and
analysed from that point of view. But there
can be no politicians for controlling
theatre as politics without also exercising
its political function. How successful a
political theatre as politics?

The answer is not very successful at all.
There are limited susceptible classes which
can be made for the political effectiveness
of committed theatre. You can claim that
political theatre provides a rallying point
for like-minded people. You can claim
that at certain places and times it has
motivated religiously small numbers of people
to civil demonstrations and riots, as in the
Federal Theatre days of Willet and
Hawman, or the turbulent times of the
Abbey. It can generate lawsuits which
attract publicity, and in the days of
modern conservatism it can sometimes
generate a nucleus of public attention.
But largely the committed political theatre
conducts its business, both imaginative
and financial, with the connivance or the
indifference — the happily uninterested
upper-middle class which seems not to
care in the least that Melbourne's Aus-
tralian Performing Group, or any other
theatrical faction, should survive happily
on the taxpayer's money.

The theatre is not a very satisfactory
place in which to be politically active. The
results are simply not there. The politically
disenfranchised and disenfranchised people
in Australia are those who live in poverty,
deprivation and neglect and for the theatre
to pose as an instrument which can
effectively help these people is manifestly
self-indulgent. The theatre can and should
be able to demonstrate that neglect, this
poverty, this disenfranchisement but the
theatre exists on its sense of fun, of
celebration, and pretty soon the fact of
poverty becomes theatrical "content", the
play is experienced at the level where cost
and audience can in their own way feel
guilty, and/or good about their personal
feelings aroused by the performance.

In this area we are left in little doubt
about the political rules. The audience is
used to feel guilty and the performers, by
virtue of being politically active, are meant
to feel good.

Of course, there's nothing necessarily
wrong about that. And there's nothing
necessarily right about it either. What has
happened is that an event has occurred in
a public place from which a relatively

THE POLITICS OF SELF INDULGENCE

small number of people has derived pleasure.

In the theatre politics rapidly enlarges its role as the source of enthusiasm and soon becomes part of the audience's ambience. There is a politics at work in the lumber as in conviction by guideline during the French revolution. Something is to be gotten on with while you're waiting.

That said it might be interesting to ask what impact modern political ideologies have had on the theatre in Australia. In the major intellectual theatre the effect has been negligible. The repertoire has been expanded to include some quarantine works from the left. Programme notes and actors' biographies make passing references such as "Fascists here — mine" and occasionally companies such as the South Australian Theatre Company under George Ogilvie's regime talk as though the middle-class audience needs to be educated culturally and politically and by God they're going to do it. That's about as far as it goes.

In the smaller theatres a number of political gestures are made but the achievements can be measured in good old uncommitted terms. The major achievement of the Australian Performing Group and it is indeed a major achievement, lies in the extent it has given to the Australian theatre. It has had no discernible effect on Australian politics but its method of work have generated a certain amount of theatrical practice and it has acted as an excellent lead for the companies which receive larger subsidies. It has also provided a life style focus for a number of Melbourne citizens. It also believes in what it does. The weakness of the APG's position is reflected in a production of *The Miser* which I saw there in 1975. In this play by Molière there is a scene in which a self-proclaimed who is by no means politically "correct", is reproached by a revolutionary cell to teach the members to read and write. When members of the cell wish to spend their time discussing the political implications of the school teacher's position the Miser brings them back to the fact that learning to read and write provides a basic revolutionary tool. Now being able to communicate clearly through a voice and a body which works specifically for the actor is a basic theatrical tool and no amount of "political correctness" can replace it. If the performers are not capable of spontaneity then exercises and performers share vague generalisations which, if they are all of one mind, make them feel cosy and warm and right. But any revolution depends upon either a stunning example of "correctness", or the ability to convince enough people by argument, or the ability to sweep people along emotionally (often) or force of arms. The production I saw was capable of none of these alternatives. The actors had no discernible communicative skills and no threatening stunts as guerrilla fighters having a night off. As politics it was a failure. As theatre it was less than convincing. As art — well, it wasn't.

The other effect of political thinking has been in the contemporary theatre area where

some companies have tried to involve the community in the process of making theatre, and some communities have tried to do this for themselves. Many of these activities have no political overtones and are simply part of the self-expression, socialisation, group, do-it-yourself, cultural grass-roots which plants all of us, including politicians, because it threatens none of us. Some companies do have political ambitions. In this they are up against the interface of arts and education where politics has a most uneasy role. Politics implies public discipline and private freedom. Art implies personal discipline and public freedom. "Cultural" education, more and more, implies self-expression. Art implies skill. Education implies shared knowledge. But our cultural education has veered away from the shared experience of mutually understood information to the imposition, on our apprentices, of layer upon layer of partially held opinions. No wonder the arts have taken to half-digested ideology. What have the arts and education left us to share?

Ancient imagery, traditional experience, has been sheltered by education in favour of understated personal experience. Commercial pop, political pop, advertising, mass television and the easily read paperback have replaced the old ways of sharing. How can people read Marx or Brecht or Mann without an understanding of their language?

The theatre can help us to share the experiences we value to celebrate our lives to laugh at our inadequacies, to focus on those significant human actions which are repeated in all political systems and to direct attention to the possibility of a world whose ideals are based on respect, pity, grace and where as few people as possible with that they had never been born.

Ideology which helps us focus on those goals is worth more than a passing thought. But most ideology simply serves as a way of rationalising our own prejudices, over-simplification and repetition done to others and serves as a substitute for a cold hard look at the facts.

If politics is the art of survival, art when it seeks to be judged in political terms is the politics of self-education.



FOOTNOTE

This article owes a great deal to many conversations with John Willett, who is co-director of the production of "Pantalo" which will occur next year.



The APG's *Reinfective Horror Show* — 1977. Photo: Pauck Hawkins



Scenes from *W. G. Sebald's The Theatrical Effect*



Mick Rodger



The first thing that one notices about Melbourne Theatre Company director, Mick Rodger, is his lack of pretensions. He is in no way precious. These quirks, mannerisms, habits and idiosyncrasies that are associated with the popular caricatures of the stage director are not found in Mick Rodger at all. Publicly professional and privately, he seems content to be what he is — an extremely talented, nice bloke.

Eighteen, Rodger's venture of Alan Ayckbourn's *Just Between Friends* is playing at the Russell Street Theatre, and Rodger is rehearsing his next play, Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which will open at the Athenaeum on September 3. Certainly, Mick Rodger has both hands very full at the moment.

But, even when he is at his most frantic, Rodger manages to resemble my cousin of Bilbo Baggins — a bonny, contented, shy,

rather heavy, amused and gentle sort of *tattlerdammer* — although, to be fair, he is somewhat heavier than a thoughtful Hobbit would consider ideal. This disarming front effectively conceals two of Rodger's most valuable qualities, the delightful irony of his humour, and his gift of observation.

Strong traces of both of these attributes can be found in a story that Rodger told me about a recent Saturday lunch at his favourite suburban pub.

"I'd joined my usual," he said, "and I was sitting in the back bar drinking wine, relaxing, and watching the people. Groups of people always fascinate me. Occasionally I began to sense an odd atmosphere. Something seemed to be happening, but I couldn't tell what it was.

"Suddenly, an attractive blonde girl stood onto the bar and began to take off her clothes. She danced to the music from

the radio, and very well, too. Then a man joined her, and the pair of them did a brilliant stand up of a bump and grind song. They were beautiful, very funny. The lovely thing about it was that the performance was natural. I knew that I couldn't have directed them to do a routine like that so perfectly. It was pure theatre. The people in the bar just loved it.

There were, however, of course, and during one of these I left the bar and took myself to the lavatory. One of the odd, obese, heavy chaps from the front bar was there, a local. He made it quite clear that he observed the way I was dressed — my high boots and bar jacket seemed to confuse him somewhat — and he started to mock me. First he called me a twerp, and when this didn't work he offered me his cigarette to smoke and called me an 'effing cowboy'.

"My God!" I had to retreat as he took him into the back bar with me. If my clothes apart the poor chap so much, the scene in the back bar would have made him pass out!"

Mick Rodger started his life in England, thirty-five years ago. "I was born during a heavy blizzard," he says. "In Crewe, of all places. Generally people only go through Crewe when they're on their way to somewhere else."

Such was the case with the infant Rodger, who moved to Birmingham when he was three. He remembers with affection the Sunday nights that he spent in the Bull Ring, the hot elements, the speakers and the atmosphere of street theatre.

Rodger passed the 11+ examinations (which he regards as inequities) rather well, and went a scholarship to a grammar school. This surprised his entire family because he had shown no great potential at primary school. ("The family thought I was a dumb kid," he remembers, "and I tended to agree with them.") In those days, candidates for 11+ exams had to nominate three schools that they would like to attend if they were successful, and Rodger selected Handsworth Grammar, a Church of England school with an excellent academic record, as his first choice. He did this partly because of the affinity involved in the notion that a 'dumb kid' could win his way to Handsworth, and he was amazed when he was accepted.

In 1956, Rodger's parents decided to emigrate to Australia, and the family settled in Adelaide. Inevitably, Rodger found his way to Adelaide University, where he enrolled as a medical student. However, he found the pressure of the first year's work to be so heavy that the course precluded any activity that was not directly related to study. He held the opinion that university life should offer more than hard work, that the ancillary attractions of the campus were quite as vital for a rounded education as were formal lectures and tutorials, so he quit medicine and took up a more congenial option, *Hennessy English*.

"It was quite strange," he says. "When I had been at school I'd done a lot of debating, so, when I started the arts course, I decided to join the Debating Society. I found out that there was a meeting of the society, and I went along, but I got either the date or the room

and I faced myself at a meeting of the Drama Society. I was immediately welcomed — as was everyone else in the room — to the forthcoming production of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Further more, I was cast as Antonio!

So, introduced to drama and the theatre by accident, Rodger found himself totally absorbed in a completely new world. "I never got to school at Anisone, and I don't even know how I went. But, subsequently, I got to enjoy the acting. It was as if I had glimpsed the Promised Land. I thought I could fly."

"I spent the next four years at university doing plays, getting better and learning, and finally I landed up as Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*. I left an enormous identification with Jimmy. The play was fairly new then — it had only just started to be done in Australia — and the experience of acting in it made me think of *Delmore* as a manner." Now, however, *Delmore* is something of a disappointment to Rodger.

At the end of four happy years on the boards, Rodger graduated from university with first class honours. In doing so, he picked up a scholarship that carried with it a grant to be used for further study overseas, so, in 1965, Rodger went to Oxford to study for his B Lit.

He missed the great west of Oxford comedy talent by a couple of years and several thousand miles, and this may have contributed to his initial response to Oxford. "At first I thought I'd got onto some kind of academic conveyor belt. The thing that turned me off most of all was the Oxford academic atmosphere, which was so stifling."

"To give an example — one of the first things that I did after I arrived was to look up the Oxford University Dramatic Society and get myself into a show. This was the year the QUIDS took *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* to Edinburgh. My initial tutor — he was only two years older than me — was also my English tutor, and one day he took me aside and said, 'I understand you're dabbling in theatre-ah?' I admitted that this was the case. 'Look here,' he said, 'that sort of thing is all very fine for undergraduates, but post-graduates should be beyond it. Amazing!'

Undeterred by this intellectual snobbery, Rodger went on to direct plays for QUIDS, and also for the Experimental Theatre Club. While his tutors were urging him towards an academic career, he was perceiving theatre to be a living thing — something to be done rather than taught.

Oxford found Rodger to be an attractive person. "One day I received the most outstanding invitation, 'to join and attend a meeting of the Fifty Five Club'. The meeting was at Christ Church which seems to be for well-to-do public school kids and the aristocracy, and I was from Bath, which is the intellectual college. So I had to go, just out of curiosity."

"Well, there was a dinner in progress at a long table, and around the table were assembled — I later discovered — the fifty five most important students of that particular year. Oh, the fifty four most important, and one God knows how I was

selected, but it was interesting. I mean, there was I — of the radical left — talking to a group of the enemy about which way to pass the port!"

Strange still. But Oxford has its own strangeness, its own magic. The high bar soon met at Oxford found its own unworldly teachers and a young man, whether under or post-graduate, can find the academic subjective life can hardly be real if the world is not. Rodger took in poetry, drank, revelled, and did what one would expect, and he also earned. Perhaps significantly, he remembers *Amadeus*, the 1967 Joseph Losey film which was scripted by Harold Pinter as being an accurate record of the 'feeling' of his years at Oxford.

Rodger didn't come back to Australia immediately. By 1968, he was a professional in the business, having as one of his credentials doctoral success in a student drama competition that was judged by the renowned, available Harold Hobson himself. (Years later, when Rodger was a member of the audience at Stratford, he gathered his courage and approached Hobson at the theatre bar. Oh, yes! Certainly! Hobson remembered Rodger. He remembered every detail of the play in question, and he was delighted that Rodger had approached him. What a character! —)

In an effort to stay afloat and beat the banks at the money game, Rodger applied for — and won — a place in the ITV Trainee Director's scheme, a position that gave him (as he puts it) a lock in the door. He claims that he learned a lot there, but the truth is that he left the lights of television as rapidly as he could. He went back to the theatre, at once, back to the real theatre.

Rodger became involved in the success of the play, *Joe Zoo* (Williamson Jones did *Madworld*'s *Erle Holmbeck* and *Am Struggles Against the Kewards*, which had both a long title and a long run. He did *The Superannuated Man* in Whitford, an opportunity, then, in 1971, he presented to Tottenham Court Road and a six month house with Charles Marowitz.

Marowitz is an innovator who starts — generally — with experimental writing. He tends to reconstruct classics, relying on his own intellect to make experimental (rather than improvisational) interpretations of the key characters. I have wondered whether Rodger's recent *Richard III* owed anything at all to Marowitz's influence.

Whatever, Rodger remembers Marowitz as an intellectual who had some considerable trouble communicating his abstract theories to the actors in his charge. Rodger was aware of the man's power, and of his importance, but he thought that the actors generally found him awkward when directed by him. His own laid, friendly style may have evolved in contrast.

Mark Rodger then became enthused with the idea of taking theatre into the regions rather than winning — as most of his fellow directors were — towards bringing audiences into the city. He found himself at the head of a company called East Melbourne Melb Arts (EMMA) which was dedicated to mobility and adaptability. EMMA staged short plays,



Bruce Myles in Rodger's *Richard III*
Photo: David Parker

for short runs, usually to uneducated theatre audiences, and met with success. Theatre was working for the people.

New Mick Rodger is naturally an Assistant Director — with Bruce Myles — of the Melbourne Theatre Company. But what's in a name? Both Bruce and Mick are busy directors, both seem to have transcended the appellation "Assistant".

Rodger takes the qualified praise of the critics for his last *Shoreline* (*Overlook* with the combined aplomb and resignation of the victim). "Basically, I'm quite pleased with the reception, although I do feel that the problem with *Shoreline* is that it's not understood in this country. In Melbourne, the critics seem to believe that it's something a foreign, it's usual."

His current project is *Deafie* (Stiff Wood), a play that he considers to be far the real and not far the eye. The problem, he thinks, is to find a visual balance, and, to do this, he proposes a system of half-masks for the cast ("I'll use them during as and all stage changing scenes, the damn thing will just become an athletic contest"). Sixty seven characters are allotted to in the play, he says, and most of them speak. He plans to perform the play with a cast of thirteen. (The current production of *Deafie* (Stiff Wood) at London's Mayfield Theatre uses only six performers for the thirty two voices that are represented.)

The future? Rodger plans to take twelve months off for a serious writing project. He says that he has twenty one separate ideas for plays, and that all he waits is the time to get his head down. The current favourite of the twenty one is a play about Brecht, particularly the angry dispute between Brecht of the later years. He makes the idea of having time to write.

Mick Rodger may well have become an academic had he not been disappointed by some of the negative aspects of the Oxford literature hierarchy, and had he not become so enthused with the art of theatre.

Rodger will not live, as it were, and I for one am glad he did.

Lynette Curran (Pina) and John Bowman (Ole) in *MTV's Act Between Overtures*
Photo: David Parker



When I last wrote for these pages I was complaining about how cold it was in New York, now I'm complaining how hot it is. The air conditioners grind away, dribbling on the passersby, but they seem to have as little effect upon the stifling heat (it's not the heat, it's the humidity) as the heat has on the eager theatre audiences. There are few empty seats. The heat of course enhances the stench of the streets around Times Square, and once again many more unconscious bodies sprawled on the streets than in winter, but mutants mutant! everything is normal, and not to worry.

As a failed post-script to my last article, one of the plays I reported on, and with least success, *Cold Storage* by Ronald Kibman, has been so successful that it moved out of the American Place Theatre and into a Broadway house and continues to be successful. Larry Gelbart's *Sly Fox* with George C. Scott belabored on Broadway run and it now is that Greta Garbo's playing Volpurga now, *Jacob Gleser* which strikes me as only slightly less ludicrous than the role being played by Jackie Onassis, or, to be truthful anyone else unfortunate enough to be called Jackie.

A *Chicago* line is still running and is still the hottest ticket in town, its momentum has boosted the latest hot ticket in town, Bob Fosse's *Dances*, which fairly well establishes that dancing is very big in New York these days. The *Wig*, the black version of *The Wizard of Oz*, which also has a great deal of dancing, is still packing them in. And then attempts have been made to re-narrate a few older classics. Carol Channing is once more doing *Milk & Honey* (it, and God, I can hardly get this one off) Yul Brynner is once more doing *The King and I* which will give the Broadway ticket spot on Wednesday afternoon. The manufactured one-act musical *Amadeus*, which had just opened when I last wrote for *Parade* magazine, is still running and is disconcerted a bit. Little Orphan Annie the show and Sandy dolls are selling briskly.

I shall focus my comments on three new plays, one by an American, one by a Canadian, and one by a Hungarian. They each received very good notices by the New York press.

A Life in the Theatre is by Daniel Mann, a young Chicago playwright, who is gaining quite a following. He has had one large success, *American Buffalo*, and several lesser successes. *A Life in the Theatre* stars Bob Fosse who, just when we thought he was out of our lives forever, like a bad penny, manages to return. The play is about two other actors, one an older, experienced veteran, and the other a young man just starting out in the profession, and their relationship back-stage. With just that much information anyone with just a modicum of imagination could sketch up some kind of story, dealing intimately with the young man's rise of passage and his education in "life." I suspect that the author may have had that in mind, but he was not able to execute the idea. Instead they both at one another, the older actor accusing the younger of waste-making, they tell their

New York, New York

From Al Weiner in the U.S.A.

When I last wrote for these pages I was complaining about how cold it was in New York, now I'm complaining how hot it is. The air conditioners grind away, dribbling on the passersby, but they seem to have as little effect upon the stifling heat (it's not the heat, it's the humidity) as the heat has on the eager theatre audiences. There are few empty seats. The heat of course enhances the stench of the streets around Times Square, and once again many more unconscious bodies sprawled on the streets than in winter, but mutants mutant! everything is normal, and not to worry.

plots, and looking somewhat just over the horizon in *Providence*.

John Lee Henry's act, which is clearly the most creative element in the production, must not go unnoticed. What we see is an excellent reproduction of "backstage" — behind the curtain, but the curtain not between the actor and us, but rather the curtain between the actor and an imaginary "audience" springs. Thus, when the actor "play" a scene, it is not to us, but to the imaginary "audience" — the actor's backs are to us. When the curtain goes up we see a wonderfully translated, blackened audience, complete with lighting instruments shining in our eyes and even "hot" signs.

Captain is by the Hungarian Istvan Orloty, and stars Helen Barnes. I had heard neither of the author nor the leading actress prior to seeing this show. I was attracted to it because John Simon, the critical lion of New York, who, when he grants the status around Shubert Alley, his job he has developed them only recently dripping with fresh blood, once playwrights to trouble, and actors (especially actresses whose brains are not active as they enter my heart) have to go into hysteria, declared it the best show of the season, and Mr. Barnes the best actress. This same Mr. Barnes had the audacity to make disparaging remarks about the climactic of the breasts of Australia's own Zoe Caldwell. But I must say that for John Simon, but is the only person ever to call me a liar in classical Greek, correct spelling case, everything.

Captain is a comedy about a sixty-five year old widow (Ms. Barnes plays her at about forty) but living in Budapest. Helen Barnes plays the role of Bela Orban, a woman with a large and aggressive sense of language, and a somewhat sense of humor. Thus when the talk is live with Victor Vrechi — "a huge lump of pink flesh — but I love him" — she discards her grey rag of a housecoat, her motherhood jumper, and her orthopedic combiboots, and dons first a peach-colored net, with high-heeled shoes in which she can hardly stand erect, and then an aggressive parrot with stripes that would enhance a football field. Thus affixed looking rather

like Abraham Lincoln only not so pretty, she goes to her Victor (and in reality. That evening her hair fringed with Victor away, and in other dislodging the clumps a whole bottle of what she believes are sleeping pills into a mug, then fills the mug with chicken soup, and hands it in a jug. "Not bad," she remarks, and then lies down to die, wringing her face, waiting for Death's big grip to feel her up. Of course sugar pills only give you gas.

There are at least two baby notes, one in the direction, and the other on the script. Much of the play's dialogue takes place between Bela and her sister who is living in Germany. During these scenes the sister is cowering and they speak to one another, but they do not see one another. This can be excused, perhaps, as a mere coincidence, but it is very confusing in that we cannot figure out how they are communicating, whether by telephone, letter, or teleplay. Better directors could probably solve this problem. Not so easily solved, however, is the playwright's total avoidance of the political situation in Hungary. This may make his Communist support happy, but to us it is a puzzle. The play takes place in the 1960s, when Hungary was analyzed even more brutally than it is today, yet Mr. Orloty pretends that Bela is living in a free country, with good middle-class values, and that she could travel to visit her sister in Germany any time she desired.

One does not think of Jack Lemmon as a stage actor and with good reason. In a professional acting career that began in the early 1950s, Mr. Lemmon has appeared in only half a dozen stage plays. He is of course the bearer of that odious title, "Superstar!" But only the title is disgusting. He has created the next some of the most memorable film roles in recent decades. His portrayal of the drunk in *Days of Wine and Roses* is indelibly etched in my memory. His junior executive with a laptop but not just sense of morality in *The Apartment* was fine. I think that *Save the Tiger* is one of the most under-rated films of recent years. So, Lemmon is a film actor par excellence, but can he act? I believe he great film, superb great actor, or even actors. Clark Gable or Gary Cooper could

not, as the saying goes, act their way out of a wet paper bag. Potentially outstanding stage actors but miserably in films. Olivier and Richardson can do both with genius, as could Brando before he misinterpreted the term genius which was so frequently applied to him, thinking it referred to his intellect. But the first is there, and one can never know whether a film actor can act until he appears on the stage.

After having seen *Twelve* with Jack Lemmon, I must put him on the same list with Olivier, Richardson, and Brando. One day not long ago Lemmon received a manuscript from a "B. Slade" from Edmonton, Canada. The opening line said simply, "I write this for you so I thought I'd let you reject it." B. Slade happens to be Bernard Slade, the author of *Lower Time Next Year* which is in its fourth year on Broadway. Such modesty is rarely unAmerican. The manuscript was *Twelve*, and Lemmon thought enough of it, and was courageous enough to move his family from Hollywood to New York. We are the richer for that decision.

Twelve is a good, solid, gorgeously-crafted play, traditional perhaps a little too dark, and too unambitious by half, but I wouldn't want Mr Slade to change a word of it. When the final curtain fell I was

robbed like a baby, and having seen it at a matinee performance I had to walk down 47th Street in broad daylight, were goateously cowering down my cheeks. *Twelve* could be classified, I guess, as a serious comedy, but then all good comedies are serious, only tragedy can admit of the frivolous. *Twelve* is not potty and therefore can be quickly summarized. Scotty Thompson (he deserves a better name), played by Mr Lemmon, is a PR man who has achieved whatever material success he has won not through ability, but because everybody loves him, because just to be with him is therapeutic. His only gift, as Noel Coward said he was, is a talent to amuse. The only one who is not amused by Scotty's antics is his son Jed, a twelve two year old right mind prep kid, the child of a former marriage, comes to visit his father for a week between university terms. They have not seen one another for several years and do not know one another.

Early in the piece we learn that Scotty is dying of leukemia. The dramatic problem, then, is that father and son must discover their love for one another before the father dies. The dramatic frame of *Twelve* is an evening in which all of Scotty's friends (see the production) visit the Brooks Atkinson Theatre and pay tribute to the dying, dear

man who has so often given himself unthinkingly to us. His life is reviewed, both in direct address to us and in dramatic flashbacks. The climax of the play, which is withheld to the very last minutes, is the reconciliation between father and son. In the last scene, after having begun medical treatment for the disease, we see the ravages of cancer in Scotty for the first time. Lemmon's technical mastery of playing a dying man is brilliant, and a clown to the end, so he is taking his final act, embracing his son, his treasures fall down. Previous to this only Chaplin has been able to so embrace me that I did not know whether I was laughing or crying.

I am not prepared to label Slade a genius. It seems to me that Lemmon's acting is an essential to the success of the production as the play itself, and for that reason alone I doubt that *Twelve* will become part of our standard dramatic literature. But in this age when "imagination" is rather rare unscrupled, it valued above craftsmanship, when the "idea" is paramount and the execution is an afterthought, Mr Slade deserves our tribute. Slade and Lemmon serve one another very well, along with the fine direction of Arthur Schnitz. The inspiration was there, god knows, but so was the hard, careful work.



Jerry Herman and Helen Hunter in *Catchup*. Princeton Theatre, New York.
Photo: Gerry Goodstein

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Miriam Denner Johns (Nellie), Irene Innes (Widow Quon), Edwin Hodgeman (Christy Mathew), Aida Lewis (Honor Blake), Judith McGrath (Susan Brady), and Sally Cahill (Kate Tansy) in the MTC's *Playboy Of The Western World*.

Photo: David Parker

A one level production

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD.

RAYMOND SYNGE

One of the six plays created by John Millington Synge, *Michael's Feast* (Lynsey, Australian House, Melbourne, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976).

Raymond Synges (Lynsey, Australian House, Melbourne, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976), *The Playboy* (The Lyttelton, New Zealand, 1976).

The prospect of seeing another production of John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* did not exactly fill me with enthusiasm. Its violent and carnal — like much of James Barrie's

work — tends to make me squirm inwardly.

The theme of a man supposedly horn-rimmed because he has killed his father, then accused by his lady love when it turns out he hasn't, then again about to be lynched by the local mob by mad girl when his second attempt appears more successful, is a difficult one for me to swallow. Yet despite its improbability it was based on events related to Synge.

The real climax of *The Playboy* are of course Synge's wonderful lyrics and almost music of phrases and word imagery. To do full justice to this really calls for a full-blooded Irish company, then it can seem an exhilarating experience. Finding such a company, I would far rather read the play in private.

To add further to my dismay, on studying the programme, I discovered young Christy was to be played by an actor twice the correct age, his father by someone I would imagine to be younger than the Christy, and the Widow Quon — described by Synge as about 30, by an actress (not to be too unkind) rather

want than that.

All in all then my vibes were far from favourably inclined towards the production. I wish, as a retrospective, I could upon due and certain was complete capitulation. But alas no.

What emerged was a very competent though forwardly staged of the play by Ray Lawler. For those unfamiliar with *The Playboy* — if able to follow fully the sometimes clattering Irish accents — a workmanlike interpretation was provided.

To me it appeared very much a one-level production, rather uninspiring, and with hardly any sparks generating. Different reactions might have been experienced by those coming fresh to the play. I hope so. Judging from the appearance of the first night audience, there must have been several others sharing my apprehensions.

My forebodings about the casting were wrong aside — at least in the case of Christy and the Widow Quon. The Old Mother of Michael Edgar I was less happy with despite a greying head his face still looked too young, his general demeanour not really convincing, nor was he aged

enough socially.

The *Playboy* is usually appling Paget Breck's play — the girl who, dismissing her local intended, comes off set to mate with Christy. It is Paget who has dominated other productions I have seen, and seems to have in all the well-known productions of the play. Marie O'Neill — with whom Sygne was in love — created the role, and almost certainly it was written with her in mind. It is a part which Nathan McKenna has played on several occasions, and been referred to by Irish critics as 'the definitive Paget Breck'.

I personally found Kay Wicks' interpretation far too uncertain and subdued, needing sometimes to take too backward a seat to proceedings. Maybe this was the

effect Lawler intended.

Certainly that 'downgrading' of Breck increased the stature of Christy, and it was quite easy for that excellent actor Eileen Hodgman (looking hardly a day over twenty) to dominate and present on several occasions the evening's only fireworks. Had he been matched in personae once by the rest of the cast (indeed his scenes alone with Irene Kennedy as 'Widow Quin' come near to being highlights), then a really memorable evening may have resulted.

I doubt if many (or any) other productions of this play could boast such an excellent hands-on set of a town as that designed by Tony Trigg. Christy very 'new' looking and hardly coming up a

'lived-in' atmosphere. Cut away halfway along the back wall, it provided an outside stairway and wall and sparse vegetation (as well as sky and moon) thus giving extra acting areas.

Many in the audience must have puzzled over words and phrases which frequently made it seem it was being performed in a foreign language. Words such as 'Shelburn', 'loy', 'pottery', 'unreborn', 'banish', 'craze', 'sagittary', 'turkey', 'carrage', 'horror', 'dread', 'shock', 'hush', etc. It might have been useful had the programme included a glossary similar to that printed when the St Martin's Theatre Company (then the Little Theatre) staged the play in 1961.

Gradually gathers depth and strength

JUST BETWEEN OURSELVES

LAURENCE

Just Between Ourselves by Alan Ayckbourn. Melbourne Theatre Company. Royal Swan Theatre. Melbourne. To General July 20. 1973. Director: Nick Hargrove. Designer: Alan Carrington. Actress: Sherry Fenn. Actor: Patrick Stewart. Story: Patrick Stewart. Director: Nick Hargrove. Producer: Alan Carrington.

I am no expert on Alan Ayckbourn's work. Indeed, before *Just Between Ourselves* I had neither read nor seen a single Southborough farce. Hence, especially as the French tradition, is a lively form. It is an edifying antidote to the ordered, sane and extremely reasonable world of natural

representation. In large comically warped and deformed bourgeois people are ruthlessly, mindlessly thrown in their own way. They cope with the increasingly impossible through substituting ingenuity and modest face. Characters take it on the nose and bounce back. The audience are not interested. The audience and fools are those who live best or even best honest men. The rules of the game are the game. Sincerely entails immediate disqualification.

Just Between Ourselves is not a farce. It is a comedy. Yet it is still light and sprightly, and becomes less light and more serious as the play unfolds. The audience are seen increasingly to suffer as the case Vera, Dennis's psychologically astute and crumbling wife. Alan Ayckbourn is a cunningly crafted and deceptively bland piece of comic realism. After a cunningly superior, padded and brief first scene, the play gradually gathers depth and

strength.

The drama concentrates on two middle-class suburban couples, Ned and Pam, Vera and Dennis, along with Dennis's emotional pariahs of a mother, Marjorie. Ned is a play and a mother, Dennis is a play and a mother, a bawling middle-class man and a woman who spends most of her time talking in a garage/workshop. The women are subjected by and alienated from their selfish spouses. Pam responds by becoming more, first and independent. Vera, with the extra burden of the presence and capture Marjorie, cracks and retreats into herself.

The dominant physical image of the play is a small black car standing in the middle of the garage. It is Vera's hardly used and neglected vehicle, it is for sale. Ned wishes to purchase the car for his wife, who has no need of the thing, and sees it as a token gesture towards independence. The garage/workshop occupies all the overtones of a locked safe world — the main portals are guarded so it is impossible to take the car for a test drive, the other door also jams and can only be opened with considerable force.

Dennis's mother is one of those unbearable women for whom no wife is perfect enough for her son; she has been allowed the unbroken cord to be cut, worse still, she has wrapped it tightly around his personality and married. He chooses to let every one in a perpetual state of except some hysteria, madly laughing at Vera's growing indignation, particularly her ironic spilling and dripping of everything within sight.

Dennis's thickness is both denatured and cruel. At the end of the play he offers his wife a reasonable little birthday cake with a single candle. She blows it out, and so muffs out her spirit. Paradoxically, Dennis has just freed the garage door and offered the car as a gift to Pam and Ned. It is clearly too late. The stationary car is a female rather than a human spirit, will certainly gather dust, rust, and disintegrate for the rest of time.

Not a cheerful play, but effective in that its themes are wisely and subtly integrated there for the apprehension and not schematically or tediously imposed. It is an end critique of the stifling, security-shaded urban world which makes paralytic much of its men and drives its bewildered daughters to the wall.



John Brennan (Ned), Dennis Ghia (Dennis), Ina Fread (Vera) and Lynette Curran (Fread) in MTC's *Just Between Ourselves*. Photo: David Parker

implied setting of course reflects on the people that move in it, and the thermal is not Golden Age serenade but a place of "winter and rough weather," where the proud stage is forced and animals copulate for man's benefit, where women'd rather wait for the urinary and heretic mind humans. It celebrates the Renaissance "return to nature" ideal before it was even coined.

If the forest is a more brutally and more fully conceived one than the luscious dell of *Midwinter Night's Dream* it is because an symbolic purpose — as a metaphor of the entanglements and tangles of sexuality — is at a stage further on than the adolescent wiles of all the lovers in the earlier play. Here, even on the level of "straight" relationships, the viewpoint is both wider and more hard-bittenly cynical.

Adam Lind's set, for all, an Ardor, a useful, open acting space, landscape, luxuriously with a lay colored carpet, had the visual effect of a truly ramping scene than a rich and dampness retreat with not even the cooled wares of *Henry's Dream* to suggest more. Its effect on the production was to make the full sense of things — as here would prove on the stage, right!

Given that, the relationships unfolded too. On the most basic level — and the exception because of Nancy Walker's brilliant portrayal of the heavily besuited lamp Andy — *Time* is Touchstone's marriage purely to satisfy carnal needs. "How low is low?" The nymph and queen, Bill Chandler as a lark, how low, indeed. *Spens and Jones* watch a painting, a detached, Porco, are the eyes, says Bessie "that make the world full of flawed children" — not a hint of the benefit with these two.

At the centre in Rosalind, Shakespeare's most magnificent female – pretty, witty, wise, perceptive, yet also playful, loving and free, Angelica Pandita's beautiful young figure, her large open eyes, innocent sparkling heart, self-doubt, her allitenness and vivacity, served the part better than I have seen in many a day. Through her, emotional maturity and lack of delusion that not only put Rosalind at the position of puppet – mistress in writing, but the critic/puppeteer, but rightly was her the woman of the play. Her awareness and role playing at Ganymede! Rosalind, allows her talk of emulating the boyhood – as Renaissance fashion – before the romantic ending has given us a few back that have all resolution. Shakespeare finds that "living happily ever after" might serve as a conventional fall trap, but he pushes it to its advance as not being lost in the way of the world.

Explored on the play too, as a pro grammar note suggested though the production has to be an aspect of male and female sexuality which remains for future even today. Despite the variety Vivienne Garrahi brought to the part of Celina, as friend, confidante and below, the director did not want to make much of the implied relationship the text for Rosalind isn't her passion of Orlando, her self imposed exile, that the bulk of them as Jane's being (who drew the character of the god of love), something more than friendship?

The same applies to Rosalind/Ganymede with Orlando. Again the myth's name is that of mortal boy stolen by love to hide or ally with him. Can Shakespeare have controlled the symbol? Orlando is a counterplot and we remember the playwright's own admission for a boy in his own success. A girl, Andrew Rump — otherwise suitably yorishfully ducking as Orlando — was to *also* succeed me here.

Such explorations are not in any sense needed or urged as paralytic, on the contrary they give the play its sense of fulness. And if we believe that the melancholy Jaques (pity on him — vainly has Purvey's complaint that Shakespeare has made all possible changes of human annual propensities

If this aspect was underplayed then the sport/leisure contrast was overplayed, and again much of the problem rests with the setting. For the coast multiple variations in landscape were used to indicate spring and summer but which created slight like problems and cramped the area for the walking zone. A second tape gave the whole the aerial atmosphere of that experienced by visitors of the city.

On the one hand that Malloy seemed to try his hand too far and on the other not far enough. This — coupled with the exuberant manner which can look undeciphering — made the director appear new and then unable to distinguish between noted stars and newcomers. He mistakes the charm of having Robert Alderman, at least, play Berenbaum's Perseus in the forest made for one delicious moment as a stunning performance, when playing Oliver (based on Don Rodrigo in *Orlando*)'s wicked brother in disguise land on a bicyclist's second month, next time.

that the American at Robert's Place who was helping an act up his throat. He reserved that bleak view of the play, apart from the unsatisfactory opening scene, for his *Debating* finale when a howling wind and mad merry dance music accompanied the final couplets. Over the shoulder this (seeing an on hand of the romance comedy ending, developing an appropriate power, gave a rather to what seemed up to that point only that somewhat, miserable

too well with plays, mixed with comedy and the voice of a richly American flavor. The *Wall-to-Wall* game is something we've all indulged in one time or another: a late night's reading, TV dinner with Columbia, even a winter's night treat to the theater. The bedside reading variety is an immigrant's pleasure while he thoughtfully chews on an apple, or fragrant, television has cornered the market with its unchangeable supply of machine-gunned gay cops whose singular charm is to save us. And all parties! But less theatre holds the most promise — a direct engagement between spectators and actor, in the flesh struggle, a link between audience and characters to uncover an inexorable logic that makes sense of a modern surface.

The power of the genre is an literary and dramatic force in a simple enough manner. One submits to the details of plot which proceed upon with a typical dramatic realism while dancing, or, worse, shuffling, around under one's very nose, undisturbed by one's very nose. But ingeniously wide, most of us fall victim to the redemptive charm of the plot and, singly, if passively, await the final dramatic scenes. Here all is resolved into one (left) all too ordered pattern and, in retrospect, we now see it all, good, naturally winning aside those improbable details that were stretched and weak on unconsciously to keep us from the obvious. It follows that the test of a first rate "who-dun-it" is simply that it will stand up to a second inspection. And by extension this is the advantage of the dramatic form: for even if the plot is too easily transparent we still marvel at the depths of belief engineered by director and actors before our very eyes. Thus, in a good production, is by no means setting the second best.

The scene of *Catch Me If You Can* is an improbably probable plot. Daniel Corbett is poorly distraught when his wife Elizabeth vanishes after three days of honeymoon bliss. Elizabeth returns under the guiding care of her only, lush Father Kelleher, except — it is not Elizabeth, it is an impostor, who is longer with Kelleher. In good time, while not at nothing to get Corbett's policy life insurance of \$400,000. No one believes Corbett's claims that Elizabeth is not his real wife and things rack, grow instead like his only witness, Sidney the local Del-Owner, is accidentally murdered and Corbett's boss, never "Elizabeth" is the real thing. Suspense about all the time is the not unsympathetic Inspector Loomer who isn't that stupid and barren has the spring to plot eventual it's all a trap arranged by Loomer to force Corbett onto the open, to let his little girl confess that he has murdered Elizabeth in collect for not an inconsiderable feature — a real bullwhip.

All good and well enough for the impenetrably silly head (and the eyes spreading like a star) but it turns out he couldn't guess at no less than Inspector Levine's wife, but just you must guess if they are happily married to each other! A point belabored following an otherwise fast reversal — the happy marriage is an elaboration though exactly of what still disallows. *Myrtle*, "come down and ride"

Generally a well-tailored who-dun-it

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

ARTICLE 10

[illegible]

David Cohen, George Gessert, Joseph Louis, Peter
Wassberg, John Walker, James Weisberg, Eugene
Cohen, Nelson Wright, Isaac Ad Thompson, Mr. Peter
Harris (Harris, Louis Peter, Sam Weisberg)

Catch Me If You Can, as the title has more home belongs to the 'who-dun-it' genre, and is an excellent case of them all.

Generally this is a well tailored 'whodun' if Tom Hainsman's suggestive script expertly constructed by Mark Clow, and the necessary mood of domestic level, with an aptly mute backdrop in the theatre of mystery and fame on which the play to much depends. The original French script has been injected with a specifically American flavour to suit its Broadway run in the mid-1970s. Of course, a 1978 production loses something in this and I'm surprised that Robert Lemoine let some of the lines stay — who is *My Huggy* anyway? More to the point much of the comedy emerges untidily with the mystery, imposed by him rather than organically flowing from plot and situation. The marked jokes such as "We've been married for ten years and only had

one fight — it hasn't stopped" are stamped with American bad taste more predictable than plot reversals.

All of these things are forgivable if the acting is up to standard and sadly it is not. This reviewer granted Corbin's guilt early enough (but I never to God I didn't guess Elizabeth was Lemoine's wife) and so my focus was on individual performances. Helen Hough and James Deane turned in workman like acting and Al Thomas, as always, was Al Thomas. But the pivotal relationship of *Catch Me If You Can* comes about Corbin and Lemoine, the seemingly innocent murderer and the apparently genial but very on-the-ball cop. Serge Lazareff's Corbin was unimpassioned and unconvincing, a low key performance that left too much weight on Peter Whitford

Whitford, best known to theatre audiences for his portrayal of Betsy, responded with an excellent performance. His treatment of Lemoine blended the ranchero charm and wit of Columbo (I mean the early Peter Falk Columbo) with that comic edge that Walter Matthau best brings to these roles. Whitford was at ease with even the most head of hair and gave a restrained to Lemoine that was superbly understating.

With much good theatre on in Sydney I wouldn't place the Marion Street's talent offering too high on my list of priorities. I understand the season is well booked and, if for no other reason than watching Whitford at work, its audience shouldn't be too disappointed. And that's the end of that.



Peter Whitford (Lemoine), Helen Hough (Elizabeth) and Serge Lazareff (Corbin) in Marion Street's *Catch Me If You Can*. Photo: Peter Holderness

Oddly stirring

ST MARY'S KID and THE GLASS MENAGERIE

GREG CURRAN

There's a moment in *St Mary's Kid* (Q, Penrith) that's pretty good. Suddenly, the back doors of the theatre fly open and from a backstage as big as a shower room emerge five hundred people, looking a

football. Actually it's only fourteen school kids, but the speed of it all, and the noise, and the kicking of a goal (the ball goes in to the street outside) causes quite a change. The whole audience shakes up some heavy scoring for this rock musical quite early in the game.

The cast is different two ages, shapes, and sizes. In real life, some have left school, others are still at it, some will have come from St Mary's High or the suburban halls of Mount Drizin, Penrith et al. Certain of these kids are going to be real actors, some are not so good, others

simply aren't actors. But the magical thing is that on stage they really look like they come from the same school, the same class, and even the same football team! They act with a lack of inhibition, an admirable charm you might say (and I will, that's very winning). For director Miss Hildred and her spirited team rehearsal obviously has a new meaning — act natural!

For those who don't know, *St Mary's* is a town near Penrith where the Q performs and Penrith itself is at the foot of the Blue Mountains, so it's some way from the big

smoke *JMK* as if I think about the frustrating existence in some country that small urban communities, the lack of job opportunities, that read on Friday night, nothing to do and so on in Australia today, despondent existence and lack of opportunity are hardly confined to St Marys and if you're going to dramatise something like this you sure as hell better have something interesting to say. To a city slacker like me, *JMK* (sighs) doesn't.

But all is not doom and gloom in *JMK* on the contrary, far from looking down at the world, these kids seem to have a really good time. When they're not at school we see them upping each other at the coffee shop and elsewhere. There is no shortage of parties either. The girls get a particular charge from male confederates, and they drink and shake and trouble with repulsion (and also mainly unreciprocated) love. The whole scene, indeed the whole mood on screen is exuberantly cheered up by the cheeky pop art designs of Anthony Balducci, a big new talent I'd say. Balducci has designed a milk bar that's a collage of empty milk shake cups with the straws spout and dangling like — yes you've guessed it! These conscious shagbatter bars a big shape that's got holes at what this show sure has — a heart. Balducci's hotel bar is a phantasmagoria

of beer can-piled-on beds, and the home of Toby's Mum is a Tupperware trauma.

Had to tell what's wrong with young Toby, the "hero" of the piece. He plays the guitar too much and football too well, and maybe his grades get a bit overlooked, but he seems a model kid on the surface. He's not flashy, has a steady girl friend, loves his Mum. When his mate Frank urges victory as the open and he goes off with Cheryl for the reason, is this the start on the downward path, the beginning of the end, the gateway to adulthood? Not as far as I could see. So why is Toby always need to be in trouble with the teachers? Why is he alone to be blamed (by a curving football chorus) for the loss of the Grand Final? Well, because he had a row with Dennis (the Mum).

If Toby is a difficult case (and we have to take this on trust since we never see any of these teacher-pupil confrontations apart from a conversation with the coach which is entirely unimpressive) we have to ask why? Is his background to blame? Can the rap be pinned on his home life? There's no father it's true, but no one seems to mind that. Mum is a nice large blond (the ubiquitous Mrs Dennis Warburton) who's partial to the past but appears to do nothing about it. If Mum brought home men (which) or got drunk on the lounge

room carpet, life at home might be difficult, but all the lady really faces is a trip to the RSL club (she's also out supermarket) Tim, she hasn't been in Sydney for five years (a telling simile) but she's not out of touch. And the good lady takes as much interest in her boring son as everyone else does. Toby's certainly not neglected (indeed this lady is a fine Mum, a fine Mum, whose tag number "I have to be seen to be believed" is the best thing in the show).

In a cramped up sequence Toby gets thrown out of school. And then he can't get a job in the city (Sydney) the women he is interviewed by talk him, in an apathy tone, that it's not policy to use people from the west — it's so far to come that reliable attendance are at a premium. Can he get a job in St Mary's, she asks. No way says the lad. In St Mary's there's a waiting list for the jobs. You bet you see there's another reason why he can't get a job — his school record. How can these reasons stand together? Are they connected? Does Toby epitomise lost youth in general or is he a special case? The script tries to have it both ways. *JMK* suffers from weakness and generosity when it should be clearer and more specific. In the end our hero becomes a pop star, and the opening forbids any claims to dramatic credibility.



St Mary's Kid Q Theatre, Perth

Further reservations. Greg Apps at Toby gave, at Perth, an unanimously hand-nosed performance. As the time I saw it he seemed to cultivate some claims and quips, some directorial adjustments were needed, and I trust attended to, by the time this show hit Sydney (it opened at the Mayfair July 21). Hand-nosed which certainly seemed unnecessary in the small space at Perth's managed to put the kibosh on any real choreography — the show needs dances in a formal number sang by a rock singer (the crowd are pushed back from the stage and that's the only movement). Rather odd this. The lyrics do not hit the spot as often as they should.

For all that *St Mary's Kid* is a jolly evening, it is for the most part, quite passably well directed, with some charming performances. The score is good if not really striking enough (same for a really smashing rock number 'What's New in Sydney', sung with terrific bravura by Kerin Barnett, one of the show's emcees). The chore contributions at the end (a tribute to something or other — perhaps Toby's record go up and up and on and on and get you in the way briefly) does need to be. So, even though the finale is fairly vague in effect, it's oddly stirring as well. A strange place the theatre.



De-De Connor as Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*

The Glass Menagerie at the Arden Company is a triumph for both De O'Connor's Laura, an unexpected (and completely successful) piece of casting, and the director Rodney Diletsky, whose work at Ullman has never, in my experience, been less than good but who has never (as far as I know) had a runaway success. Diletsky has reduced the play to a platform and four white boxes, eliminated all props and other set accoutrements except for some slides, and with the help of really superb lighting, created an amazing illusion of the interior and exterior (a few scenes) of the Wingfield's tenement flat. The play moves along beautifully, — what a wonderful pity it is. This is the best production of a 'Williams' play I have ever seen. I think even Tennessee himself would like it.

Greater audience intelligibility

THE HOMECOMING

ELIZABETH PARKINS

The Homecoming by Peter Rabe. Theatre One, Town Hall, 11 to 11.30. 1984. Director: Peter Rabe. Actors: Ben Kwapp, Ron Hamilton, Tony Rabe, Peter Rabe, Tony Rabe, Ron Hamilton, Ben Kwapp, Peter Rabe.

This was a rounded, coherent production of Peter's satiristic play, but the minor aspects of *The Homecoming* were toned down to give an essentially warm if still ambiguous interpretation.

It was good theatre, even for those who held over the language of Peter's poems. Peter Rabe gave a steady direction, preferring to let his actors direct. What was lost in dramatic form was probably gained in greater audience intelligibility. Even so a letter to the local paper read "a more involving and enriching performance we have never seen" and decided that *The Homecoming* was not "worthy of our new Civic Theatre".

Generally, however, the interpretation of the play as depicting violence and baneful sibling relationships, work, as well as, Ben Kwapp, Gordon Glenwright and Peter Rabe, co-operated with local actors Ben Kwapp, Ron Hamilton and Peter Rabe, showing the professional integrity on which all quality theatre rests. Glenwright, who replaced Ben Gishel after the actor's illness during rehearsal, and Kwapp, played sustained, entirely credible roles, allowing plenty of energy without the manic overtones of some interpretations. Rabe's boy was a big baby happy enough wracking at Rabe's bosom for two hours without going any big. This shot on Peter left Hamilton with the problem of not really being the loser as Teddy. And he did get across the idea that Teddy knew all along what would happen when he brought Rabe home.

Young local actor Ben Kwapp gave a classical character study of the profit hunt, and some key moments were developed in his relationships with the family.

Peter Rabe's beautifully controlled interpretation of Rabe shaped the play, making Peter's resolution credible, and convincing a laudable control on La Pava as a neural dress.

The set explored the dimension of the Civic Theatre, and could have been brought forward for audience comfort. Peter's closed London room was expanded to a spacious Queensland one and held some good period furniture.

As Peter *The Homecoming* didn't go the whole hog, but thanks to the work and

initiative of Peter Rabe, local talent, and the show professionals, in the best sense, of the nation, Townsville audiences saw some very good theatre.

Interesting approach to time and memory

THE FATHER WE LOVED ON A BEACH BY THE SEA

KE HARDY/OTHERINGHAM

The Father We Loved On A Beach By The Sea by Steve Smith. La Bode, 11 to 11.30. 1984. Director: Rodney Diletsky. Actors: Ben Kwapp, Ron Hamilton, Tony Rabe, Peter Rabe, Tony Rabe, Ron Hamilton, Ben Kwapp, Peter Rabe.

La Bode's interesting but varied reputation since Rick Blighford became artistic director has left it at the mercy of the daily paper critics. Since La Bode's first return to theatre part of widely differing tastes, and even they don't know what to expect from one production to the next, audiences tend to flow in and out according to what they know of the current offering. Obviously this raises the overnight issue to the status of a maker or breaker of shows in critical consideration which writing for *Theater Australia* seldom involves.

In this instance both the Australian and the *Courier-Mail* damned totally Steve Smith's *The Father We Loved ...* and it's having a poor run. And yet putting on the work of new local writers is surely one of the most vital functions La Bode performs, and the category obviously deserves a special and sympathetic critical response. I also enjoyed the play, which helps.

I'd read an early draft a year ago. 'The memories of a proletarian upbringing' gave me no predictable enough as with many of the life situations presented. But I remember two strong qualities: sharp writing and observation, and an interesting approach to time and memory. The play selected here explores from the past and present lives of labor and son. The father's memories focused principally around a personal and social crisis he experienced in 1928 (unemployment cutting for a young family, and sexually impotent), a crisis which has led him to a fairly anti-social position. His son's memories ranged from his memories at that time to his present educated and aware social malcontent. The tension between his memories of a kind and loving father and his inability to communicate with that same man as an adult was well and interestingly handled.

La Bode's production retains some of these qualities, but has deviated from the focus and offers a very different script, one which I don't think is an improvement.

The production illustrates two particular problems of working with new writers who have a lot to learn to translate their plays on stage, and whose scripts lack dramatic shape.

The first problem stems from the visual staging of the production. There is no design at all on the credits, and no visual image to reinforce and facilitate the play's themes. Instead we see two specific settings — the family house (about in 1950) and the son's bedroom (in future time, as it's explained later). This literal situation of both space and time works exactly against the interestingness of time and memory which seemed potentially exciting in the first version. In that early script the processes by which experience and memory change were suggested, and in an interesting scene, father and son seemed to swap value systems, father moving time, experience, argument, belief, and memory. In this production both father and writer seem to think it is an experiment in filmic techniques of flash forward and flashback becomes instead two plays, neatly thrown together at occasional moments.

The writing means that the son is physically isolated in one stage area for much of the play, and during intervals many scenes seem to have been thrown out and a whole new story written to occupy the character's stage time. He has become not just a young radical thinker of today, but a highly principled revolutionary of tomorrow, feeling from the line after a military coup has turned Australia into a fascist state. At the end of the play he goes up to state rather than compromise and continue the struggle.

This new plot seems to me left-wing paranoia of a fairly postmodernist flavour clearly shown as the father just how far most Australians are from subversive thinking of any kind, it's difficult to believe it is Australian. In the not too distant future where thousands of appliances are brutally massacred on Beach Beach by the army and police as a total breakdown of civil administration occurs. Just as it's too glib to compare the Whitlam sinking with Allende's overthrow in Chile, so too is a smokes of self-indulgent communism to portray under One Overseas and One Nation leading mass movements here within the time span of this play.

A lot of interesting writing has been out at the shaping of this production. A bolder approach to the problems of the original script might have revealed the unlikely new fantasy unnecessary.

The focus is on making plays

CHILDREN'S THEATRE SURVEY

DON BATCHELOR

It seemed like a concerted assault. There were "children's" theatre people everywhere, and all urgently asking "Why

don't you come and write?" Could you possibly do a piece on...?" and I wondered whether (for most) young people's groups were working together. So I looked into it, scratched the surface would be more accurate, because it soon became clear how much activity there was in the field in Brisbane, and how much of it was of delicate value and indifferent quality.

Thus it, therefore, no comprehensive survey, just random reflections on work which came to my attention during recent weeks.

The first thing to remark, with one notable exception, is that far from attempted concert there is considerable isolation among the various groups. The notable exception was Ian Rees's to called "Theatre-in-Education: Get-Together" being held 2-6 October as part of the Queensland Festival of the Arts. In his typically unselfconscious and unassuming way, Ian intends to bring together older and extra music groups to work with "up to a thousand kids a day" in Albert Park. In this context he expects exchanges of ideas will occur naturally and informally. The concept of TIE is a noble one, and Ian is not the sort of person to go in for definitions, he just seems to think that one human sharing of experience is worth a dozen conferences.

Taking of adults working for kids, the Arts Theatre has just changed policy regarding their regular Saturday matinee shows. Instead of workshop kids playing to a paying audience of their peers, Ray McKee has directed an adult cast in *The Flowers of Cabbagetown* (Goreau) and an admirably entertaining job it is — bristly performed and brightly staged. Regrettably, matinee selling seems to have been regarded as some order of success, and the play itself is one of those purely sentimental pieces of junior ecology. It makes me think there is something very sick about the way our society allows the god of materialism and requires periodic self-flagellation as an act of expiation.

Over at Twelfth Night I had a talk to Jane Atkins, appointed this year as Director of the School of Speech and Drama. She readily agrees the name is antiquarian and talks of the "Yarb Theatre". Clearly her particular interest is in theatre itself, and she made quite an impression on the town with her young people's version of *The Man Who Was*. What she has in mind is a place which offers young people a disciplined experience of theatre practice. Workshops there may be and something of the club feeling, but the focus is on making plays rather than on personal or social development.

At the time-honoured state another approach. This is an ambitious project master-minded by Jonathan Barker and backed by a small group of interested citizens entirely without any grant money. Five professional people have been put in a garishly re-painted suburban cinema where they provide an array of activities on a seven day a week basis. There are musical activities, dancing, work and plays with a monthly change of programme, films, a coffee-pal and singing place,

drama workshops each afternoon, market stalls and more and more, all under one vast roof. Momentum for the first three months has been staggering, and publicly outstanding. The question is can any five people sustain this pace, especially when the economic battle must be a tough one. The August school holidays will boom numbers past the break even point and may just be what is needed to keep the superb venture alive.

One venture that is off and flying is the production by Playfuls Press of *After 40* by Noel, a musical spoof by Simon Desmet and Ian Dorrice. Mounted by the Midlife Singers at La Bode Theatre, the piece is a total guide for the High School musical market. The book is fast-moving action, full of broad caricatures and broad humour. There are plenty of roles and a generous helping of choruses. The score is concentrated for an average High School band, though there is a piano section. A cassette of the music is also available. The best point of contact is through Playfuls Press, PO Box 182, Subiaco WA 6008.

When I consider all the things I have not mentioned, it's a wonder any young person could slip through to adulthood without some sort of theatre or drama experience. But they seem to manage.

Theatre / TAS



Salamanca tour and frozen audiences

TASMANIA SURVEY

EARL HUBERT

Robert's Salamanca Theatre Company, formerly known as "Theatre in Education", when planning its current tour of the United States asked itself how best one might "Waking Midlife" to young Americans.

Director Barbara Manning decided it was a problem which needed the combined brain power of a think tank, and between performers and rehearsal the members of the company created a new play *Billy Two*. One of its characters is Dave who offers the little Americans the following explanation: "This poor old bloke, the struggle, was just sitting down having a bit of a rest under a shady tree. He must have been in a good mood then, 'cos they reckon he's gilly in the song, anyway he's shaved his belly on the campfire and he's looking forward to a nice hot nap of tea, and he's singing away about how he got tramping around the countryside with all he's got in the world to call his own rolled up in his holy old blanket, when out of the corner

PANDORA'S CROSS

By Dorothy Hewett



Photo by Thomas G. Hall

ACT 1

Don't you like?

Anna: The kissing game is an attraction through time and space to you.
Don: Come, come! And dance back to this spotlight on top of the stairs.

Anna: Oh well, I find you a little more than I like when things don't go the best of intentions, but

the falling of the sun
the fire of candlelight
and everything around us in Pandora
will you be there for me again

A shadow crosses the moon tonight Pandora
as I stand it seems the wheels are passing by
and I know that movement will I touch upon
your time

Don: And follow up the steps to Pandora
follow all the promise of your eyes
You are so slowly descending to me

Anna: Give me the medicine spirit the way to Pandora
that bring the back through time and space to
your time worlds still the crystal ball is lit up,
the candle is lit up.

I want your smile like your face
through the heavy pain it is now rising
through time and space to you

Don: And now you're in the stars where the light
is so close to you that the stars are

Anna: And now I want that feeling again
Don: And now I want that feeling again

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A shadow crosses the moon tonight Pandora
as I stand it seems the wheels are passing by
and I know that movement will I touch upon
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Anna: And now I want that feeling again

TRACERBELL

Tracerbell: I'm just a page in a story
no name in Tracerbell
and I'm looking for
my Prince

Anna: When the game gets rough
I'm not on my feet
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

Don: I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

Anna: I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

Don: I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

Anna: I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

Don: I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm
I'm not a hero I'm

that no ending seems the right one. Though the lyrics are all attempts, and their fading days are over, the lesson on playing *rehearsal* just the same. **Chorus:** For he was the Jack of Diamonds and he was the King of Clubs, and the crowed him in the morning when his cards were on the table, never knew he was a Joker, and the Joker was a wild one, never knew he played on Aces and he was the Queen of Hearts. For her hands were ringed with silver

and she wore her scarlet dress, she travelled through the country like a dove and an eagle and she met him in the garden when it rained and when it thundered, she had lost the game and knew a fool the odds were still the same. **Repeat Chorus** For she was the Queen of Diamonds, and she was the Queen of Clubs, he had crowned her in the morning and she had the Queen of Hearts. Her cards were on the table,

and she held a royal flush and she lay with him at midnight and never found the chance. **Repeat Chorus** And the thought about the time when she was free and didn't know how doesn't know the room where all the pain was, wasn't a wonder. Is her single sister beautiful she saw that he'd never come for her and she knew the dream was over and she'd lost it all alone. **Repeat Chorus**

END OF ACT ONE

(Continued from page 13)

which, in case others in the middle aged Peer and his international band of capitalists while away. And behind them a splendid merchant ship which in due course sinks to a nobody death with all hands.

As the first act is to do with dreams of physical power, so the second is concerned with power and luxury after devouring his wilderness to the olive trade and other profitable occupations. Peer becomes a tycoon with ambitions of empire, and by the end of the act there have led him to a manhouse where "remon died last night at eleven o'clock" and where he was his crown of thorns.

In Act Three the inevitable is death and decay as Peer makes his way home to his native land through shipwreck. There he encounters the Burton Moulder, who wears his body to melt down with the common mass because he has been ruthlessly himself to qualify for other lives as well. At the point of death Peer comes to understand that self-indulgence is a denial of the spirit and that he has truly lived only in the faith and love of the patient Solving. The reconciliation, in this production, is touchingly reached in an

Exotic forest which gives a business to the end of the play.

The whole is a stupendous achievement, each man demonstrating more powerfully than a regional theatre without its own ensemble is a self-defeating project. The three Peers work in harmony, responsive to the single discipline and even across a vocal homogeneity. Michael Silberg, only two years out of NIDA, is already an actor of force, imagination and cool, even an actor with a future. Fitzpatrick's engaging wit makes the second act and along and launches it, redolent with images of death and madness into the dark soliloquy of the old man portrayed by Brian James.

Of the huge line cast one further actor must be mentioned. Les Dymally is a really splendid character actor these days.

Here his three roles: the Troll King, the northern tycoon Cotton and the German madman (Begriffeld), are each to their way admirable creations.

It takes time to build a company to a peak. With each director this company, like others, has had its ups and downs. After nearly two years of steady work under Colin George the whole unit is pulling together wonderfully. Long may it continue.



Theatre Costumes

A & O Black publish a series of books cover all aspects of the design and construction of theatre costumes. The series includes:

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Costumes from ancient Egypt to 1914 are fully described in this book including jewellery, muffs and accessories.

For a complete list of theatre costume reference books, contact:

Edward Arnold
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373 Hay Street, Port Melbourne 3207
Telephone: 84 1248

(Continued from page 11)

QUOTES & QUERIES

it is acceptable in rapid changes to future shock in any part of the country."

"I guess particularly to published statements, that Sir Robert Helpmann is quickly getting the services of Kathryn (BSC) Hepburn and other overseas artists to get the Old Time going again. Bobby is visiting Kate and friends in help to visit. Well, Australian theatre has come a long way since we needed the sort of patronage and subsidies with overseas stars, as the first national fringe festival, in their declining years."

"It is hardly necessary to say although I will for Sir Robert's board that Australian theatre in the last ten years has gone through a great renaissance in play and script writing, production techniques, and acting and Australian audiences have gotten to their own plays with tremendous enthusiasm. They have returned the Australian content, language and actors in ways which hardly seemed possible ten years ago."



THE G THEATRE

ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE

by JOE ORTON

Sep 13 Oct 1 — Perth
Oct 4 7 — Newcastle Town Hall
Oct 11 15 — Melbourne Auditorium
Perambula

THE DRUNKARD

Opens Oct 13 — Newcastle Town Hall

THE G THEATRE

PO BOX 10 PLYMOUTH VIC 3207 01175

World Ballet Stars — relatively faultless, secure dancing



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apart from being thankful for being able to work on many neutral international dance events working on one stage together, the Ecdysis programme Twenty Days of World Rites was a most welcome lift to us that helped to convey the message on again of open performance from the international Australian Rites. Here at last we could at least, not worry when the dancers would make it through the night. Here we could witness relatively fearless, uncorrupted and some different acts.

To be fair of course, the entire international campaign was made up of prime bullheads and primary democrats all of them at the top of their professions. In fact, upon reflection, one did wonder how bright the analysis and logistics involved in the enterprise. Normally such a task up is reserved for a Central Command or Interpol-type gale force unit. To have them together for a five week run of the Australian continent takes a bit of co-ordination, organisation and money.

Whether it drops off his primary of talent in other fields, Sir Robert Hoggins has more

When a meeting was announced with the aim of the support of the international dance world and meant to be done for the first talking to women all these people in a room that isn't the sort of change by its abundance. Perhaps it was the sheer novelty of the experience that prompted them all to appear together: these men from Russia, Britain, Germany, Japan and America and Denmark whom all accounts the morning classes were a real, perhaps the catalyst of a touring again asked their fancy or maybe just the drive of dancing in a new territory. Without the reasons, the Filipino organizations got there on their own and managed by and large to bring all the personnel (personal and keep them for the season of the show.

Such an evening at The Twain, Sons of World's Best acts as a broader mirror: wags than not, for the cranks it is a chance to see top-line tastings from overseas, by which to judge the local product as they rarely get a chance to get overseas to judge the product on home ground. It offers outsiders a quick peek at some world-

and style of choreography that they influence, been apparent and has practically everyone at once, the welcome sense of witnessing some different manner of dancing apart from the long R&D method that seems to permeate the American style.

There are a few groups one could jump on about the whole matter. Firstly, on the importance of the coming night in Sydney, it's preposterous, at least based on length, at the time long. Towards the end Elyjah's crowd have misinterpreted Nigmyah and Pervaya and one would have noticed by then the whole thing had turned to full-blown riot. The attendees were pretty hopelessly predictable with the usual Black Swans, White Swans and One Q's misperceived with a few of the house-craft pattern in one however saved by having Finemong' Pinks. The Lancers danced by the original Housecraft came from Anna Maria del Arcadia.

It cannot be said of the different doctors and their styles, that one was better than the other as it had no consequences of these in our mind.

their adaptive company. For generosity and grace and would travel far to find something so serene and efficient as Marie Perle and Wayne Lipman in the Aurora pas de deux. The Royal Ballet being their background, it was, in the expected way, they would tell this most economic of dances with regular and beautiful but in-do-it with such contrast and lightness of touch, with such poise and focus and significance made a more every dance than a wedding dance of a prince and a princess should be.

Cynthia Gregory dancing in the Grand Pas Chaconne with American dance wonderful Fernando Baynes, worried some people. She seemed too big, too ungainly, her dancing too severe and military, well this again was her training. Admittedly in the form of American dance, she couldn't do that a lot of the time the heart missing, but Gregory's technique cannot be faulted, her sense of balance is rock, and not long words but hard and for me, that was the trouble. It was a look that no hands approach for too long to be appealing, but it gave everyone a chance to see something and someone unique. As for Baynes, he was in dry and mechanically doll like on the two Japanese dances (most of whom later) Pin Dips, on satohs, and on the other. Her gracefulness and grace in *La Chaconne* had the same look in *Joan Little and Grief* and the performance in those works seemed to be composed by 1944.

Maria Lopez and Marina Koudachova from the Bolshoi spring and leap about in *Minotaur* as the house. Spring flowers. It's not lots of lovely jumps and heart melting curves and lots for all of five minutes. We don't see them at all after that on the opening night, if you looked you missed them. Maria (dressed) falling in past lives before it falls of the film and my danced for some time, especially *Pavane* or *Lepus* otherwise known as the Minotaur at Sydney Opera simply because the "minot" is Peter Horton's Minotaur, poor in *Pavane* or *Scapula*. Although the film put me a bit of weight since I had seen her she is still intriguing and elegant in this world you live in (the film didn't go into *Reign of the Gods*). It's a great, it's hard edged but better sometimes dancing like the dance of Shiva, she was who danced the Minotaur into existence at other times looking like a class act. Specially *Deceit* is so interesting, my looking to everything that she does.

Peter Hays, coming from the Dances of Opus Ballet danced a water old hands piece on the male body but so the terribly old hands. Adapted from *Alfonso*. You know the son of things, ungodly weighted, clanking all night, parading and grand judge. There were quite a few fogged up eyes, glasses leaning forward around me but a little more cold.

As I mentioned above, when I went the evening at an evening, instead of being a become the ballet's reputation of a box of Wishing. But chocolate was a flowering I had. *The Dream*. Based on the Russian play of the same name, it added a welcome dash of surreal

and going to the very essence of the program. But clearly out of the context of a dance class in terms of challenge was a mixed bag, number 4 revealed parts of the dance world, of course I had been in *Deceit*, but not.

What was even more welcome was to see a performance by Fernando Hays himself and by the way, he is the pasteur he is from the Royal Dutch Ballet. As the young ballerina who got the stage was Anna Maria del Angelo from the New York Robert Joffe company. Again there was that little show for edge in the dancing, but here at least it was visible. There's not much to be any hard in this human ballet in all hard, cold, same, and almost good like Shiva's other human being. *The Dream of Shiva*.

Yoko Mizushima and Tamasu "Mama" dancing the *Don Quixote* pas de deux had people standing on their seats by the end of the first



Marina Koudachova as Queen of the Dance
(Dances of the Don Quixote by Marina Koudachova)
Photo: Peter Hays

exhilarating were they with the food and dancing all that is needed for *Don Quixote*. I hope I'm not living philosophy when I say that you have a lot of small acts and fine bowed bodies helped them so and have especially when Yoko Mizushima flew up into a one-handed lift with her husband. Being light-weight has always been a help in classical dance but I still got the surprising feeling that this was a *Don Quixote* by contrast, dolls. I wished that they had a form type can take nearly everyone in the performance and I would have wished looking them in some way more than.

And so we came to the grand show and of the evening. Marie Margot Fantasy dancing with the probability with Antonio Director of the Australian Ballet from Pigeon (number four long film).

Fantasy no longer leaps and bounds, moved and wrings and she had no need to. We already had our fill of make rubber clays by the time she and Pigeon came on in *George Stubbins' Pigeon and John*. What we got now was not so much a dance of a performance but the discipline of a performance right down to the

most economic gesture of control and form. Fantasy's last is a full perfect, she always was a typical dancer, a perfectionist, and she always worked that with a story to a theme. Before her last, she was never so far from. Added to that, she has always done that when dancing with a perfect partner and Naga is one of the most thoughtful partners in the history. Gregory Markizova, Marie Perle and Fantasy will all testify to that.

Along with Marie Perle's work for her *A and J* and only rarely the history late work, but it is something when he gets into a full Adolphe. Fantasy's possible passion and many elegant on all hand in. The two bodies, when they are other like the most had eye and the two and finally seem like a misquipped moment in history. It was totally inside the point, while watching her to believe that Fantasy's nearly sixty years old.

The only pay here was after we couldn't have seen Pigeon dancing something more pleasing of his talent like the *La Minotaur* pas de deux for example.

Lastly we had Vladimir Kirov and Beata Kall dancing two *Crimbs* works, the last *Pavane* of the Minotaur, a lovely feature with and long, long, long, and the other *Wishing*. Some. They both danced like a dream that what could one expect. They were both trained in *Crimbs*' style, trained by Anna Wladimirovna and brought up within the company of Marie Perle. Their style would be second nature to them. What was even more interesting was that we didn't have a unified and coherent version of *Crimbs* work, it was both and there is a C. I could not find their training on the wings.

Some and dance always seem more natural than I think, it is the main reason, where he has been from to me, that he sometimes gets stuck and overcomes. But in the *Wishing* that it was different and surprising, a slow, lyrical, choreography was worked with care by Kall and Kirov. These two also brought the right meaning of fluidity and continuous movement to the *Pavane* of the Minotaur, also without allowing a full and elegant.

All in all it was an evening to remember and never for the future. The whole was accomplished without any problems and enjoyed it. We can't have it all the time of course, we got to go with a lot of love, dancers, Pigeon's place, but the two were on three more, include the American Ballet Theatre, together with Pigeon's version of the *Rule of Love* and Tamasu's work, the *Dance of the Minotaur* — the strongest all right classical ballet company — also the company — the strongest all right modern dance company — and the Bolshoi Ballet once more. They are also bringing on a Minotaur and *Wishing* perhaps, like I suggested in this column last year, maybe something in long film is looking at.

It all looks like an evening long up I could not be greedy and hope one day that they'll bring me the entire Minotaur-Graham Company on the New York City Ballet. One hopes.

Opera from the capitals

There was no dearth of interesting opera during July and early August as six of the first Australian capital cities I managed to visit, though I could not honestly express unqualified enthusiasm about any of the productions I was able to see.

The closest to a night of pure enjoyment to the director was the Australian Opera *Don Giovanni* as presented at the Sydney Opera House on July 19 but inevitably the high profile event of the month had to be John Satherland's Australian debut at Perth, which came on the same night a couple of weeks earlier.

It was a night of unimpassioned musical snippets for the two principal female soloists, Richard Buryaga and the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. It was a night of distinctly qualified interest on the male vocalists front, and of the production itself the less said the better.

Satherland has been quoted as saying: *Perseus* is the most difficult and demanding role, and it is easy to hear why. Those who grumbled at the fragmentation of Britten's two-act into four scenes by the addition of these two miserable women ought to have been surely silenced by the no doubt imposed — even if only marginally — standard of the singing which resulted thereafter.

There was no doubt at any stage that *Perseus* is an admirable vehicle for Satherland's prodigious talents as *The Merry Wives*. It takes a lot of time to hear any doubt of the merit of either of the two supporting actresses who shared the role of Adalgisa in these *Perseus*. Vassily, Margyria Elina, who opened in the part, perhaps showed marginally better than Wilma Rigg, who came into the role a little later. The Rigg made more of the part dramatically — and besides, both are so good it is just these irrelevant and superfluous remarks to make comparisons.

The male soloist Adalgisa of these *Perseus* was a good deal more exposed. I have great admiration for Rose Savelles as a singing artist, but he is not by the widest stretch of the imagination a first class singer. He sang as well as I have ever heard him as Pollock, and on a fine night of a *Perseus* presented on the domestic department, but he was nevertheless not wholly satisfying as a part that was cast for as beautiful singing as *Perseus* and Adalgisa.

Clifford Grant was a good *Orpheus* who improved considerably as he warmed into the production. The chorus sang sensitively and lucidly as required by the score.

All that, and though, this was a depressing night at the opera for those who demand more of the art form than beautiful vocal skills. Britain may well be the epitome of the bel canto art form, but a piece like *Perseus* — its cast and plot — is in fact intrinsically antithetical. There



John Satherland as *Perseus* and Wilma Rigg as *Adalgisa* in the *WDAO's Don Giovanni*. Photo: Wilma Rigg.

is no vocal scope in Puccini's *Marina's* songs for this *Perseus* and a series of vocal flares.

The highlight for both scenes is more sobering. The given in portions of the low and low scenes verges on the wigan. The supposed care of the middle two scenes looks a good deal more like a squared off exercise for the results of some new multi-track railway tunnel. The documents make no attempt to present a factual plot on stage, merely the condemned couple, each hands in hand off stage

and — vaguely following her trail — the unimpaired women might easily have mistaken for a slightly wacky scene.

Admittedly, the lightly orchestrated conclusions of Britten's score — like Donizetti's score for *Luciano Pavarotti* — is in serious odds with the dark events being portrayed on stage, but the right production can do much to establish way to, like these as credible drama. It is unfortunate that Australian audiences have had to endure such extraordinary stage realisations

of both parts in such quick succession, particularly when the singing and orchestral backing in both cases have been so well recorded.

which graced the stage of the Sydney Opera House closely in the footsteps of Norma was infinitely better than during its opening seasons in Melbourne and Newcastle a few weeks earlier. Only the very costumes and chosen were the same of course. Nearly all the principals were different, too, to maintain the freshness and the conductor.

There had clearly been some juggling up of stage closer to various points in the production but the main change was the question of the learning process of the young American bass James Morris in the title role. There was considerable doubt whether as to the merit of Morris. Was it was a big mistake of the part at every way failed, it was amazingly so big for the house and the local company — not panned in the production of singing alone like the New York Metropolitan.

There was some when the very art of Morris' interpretation swayed the others in the cast there were more times when he seemed to provide some of them in singing, overestimated their vocal resources even in singing in comparison to the production of the conductor.

But overall the production of Don Giovanni is now a masterpiece achievement — for and away the best I have ever seen on stage, and makes in front of the five previous productions of the part by the AO and its predecessors over the past twenty odd years.

John Gardner was a convincing and sympathetic Don Juan despite some trouble in the top of her range on several nights. Hans Koppel-Winter was a worthy father figure and married figure, and aged Dr. Faustus with the part vocally than I had dared to hear. New Zealand was a beautiful and convincing Leporello who never allowed himself to be swamped or spangled by Morris vocally or dramatically.

Helen Wicks was a reliable Don Ottavio in all departments and looked Bachman's glorious Ariadne quality of that a little bit in one in the part dramatically. Donald Sharke was an imposing Commendatore. Only Lyndon Symonds' Masetto was something of a disappointment, partly sang, but too tentative dramatically as if he were devoted excessively to the seductively singing stage presence of Morris. Richard Bennett kept a tight rein on the proceedings from the pit, and the performance was excellent musically.

The pitral under review was also an extremely active one on the regional level, with major productions in all the major regional and a couple of that triumph among them.

Most successful overall was the season of Mozart's *Allorenza* mounted by Victoria State Opera, featuring Ronald Dowd in the title role and Beverly Bergen as Elvira. The relatively simple but masterfully effective production was designed by John Trueman, directed by

Robert Langley and costumed by Richard Dwyll.

Allorenza is an ideal vehicle for the mature voice and stage presence of Dowd, and he sang in most impressive, and Elvira's marvellously musical imagination were well handled by Bergen who added her singing with a thoroughly unobtrusive but dramatically effective musical fullness of the conductor. The appearance of the two women, the triumph and sacrifice scenes were all handled more effectively by Bergen and Dowd.

Apart from the two central characters mentioned above, most of the principals was able to sing consistently well with all the difficulties of the vocal line, though both Helene Norblad (Isid) and Graham Wall (Masetto) were noticeably excellent.

The production of Mozart's *Major Flute* mounted by the Queensland Opera Company was a brilliant design concept for Peter Centa equally as excellent in quite different ways as John Goodrich for the AO of which I am a fairly enthusiastic fan. The star-making Queen of the Night really blazed on her first appearance, the three boys' machine was as home and variable as the orchestra by her and was well handled with great vocal effect, the John Thompson's production was completely to the point, Graham Young's production had and the results produced by the Queensland Theatre Orchestra mostly accurate and pleasing.

Overseeing among the singers were Phyllis Ball in the Queen of the Night — her second act in particular, was most accurate and pleasing in the vocal aspects; department then including the dramatic company has been able to come up with Paul Meek's Paganini and Arthur Johnson's Macbeth, Sally Robertson's Fanny, Betty Charles's Seneca and Denis Whelan's Spenser were all thoroughly satisfying, as was the ensemble singing of the three ladies and the three boys.

Sally the scheduled Taming, Robert Harrington was suffering from a severe throat ailment which prevented him from singing most performances (he was replaced by the marvellous and experienced AO exponent of the part, Robert Gandy the night I attended Harrington did sing, and managed some very welcome; Macbeth's phrases which released he could do full justice to the part when in good voice.

The *Desire* mounted by State Opera of South Australia late in 1981 and early in July was the last real disappointment of the period. Marilyn Richardson made some beautiful sounds as Yveline but never for a moment really convinced me she was dying of consumption, James Christensen's Gormon Port was more pitiful and preposterous than beautiful and somewhat Anthony Rolton's Alvaro sounded well enough for the most part, but he failed to convey very much involvement in the drama apart from the very end.

John Christensen's design was the major flaw in this *Desire*. The party sets of Act 1 and III

gave an unfortunate impression of isolation rather than safe society confinement. It was a paradigmatic theory to create Act III from inside the solitary home to its terrace and garden, but the atmosphere needed up a scene between the two gardens of a desolate Australian country pub and a plant variety in the corner suburbs of one of our big cities, not points prefabricated, and a touch of imagination whatever an audience a bush dummy past beyond the slightly suggest instead well on stage right. Only the last act scene more or less really worked, and that was far from enough to come for the rest of the first three.

Bertram's *Henry's Albany* Henry had a fine production in the Canberra Playhouse designed by James Robertson directed by Thomas Clarke and costumed by Christopher Lyndon Cox.

Many of the Canberra performers caught the nature of their scenes more superbly — in particular, perhaps John Robertson Lady Belovet, Bryan Dowling's Supernaturalist, David and Margaret Clancy's Florence (Pina). Most of the company was good though John Lander's major looked more like Starlock Holmes on the point I have a small digression.

But Raymond Gormon's Henry did not quite convince me at any stage, he sang and acted very well but — like most performers capable of coping with the part really — simply cannot get away with performing a rather unconvincing concept.

Finally came a *Gypsy* *Alvina* at Sydney's suburban Blackheath, in which Jennifer Lindfield was an excellent Sally and Kerry O'Connor a fine Ariadne. John Collette made a good fit of the rather far from *Gypsy* and Andrew Ford was a most successful Barnaby who sang with immense gusto and acted with little subtlety. David Goodrich's production was quite good, and Collette's Ariadne's musical direction was as always consistently reliable.

Next month I will catch up with the Australian Opera production of *Shakespeare's Twelfth Night* which I saw in Brisbane early in August.



Clifford Holland (Alvina) and John Robertson (Alvina) in *Alvina* (Photo: Brenda Clancy)

Jimmie Blacksmith — a very serious film

Tommy Lewis (left) and Fred Schepers (right) in *Jimmie Blacksmith*

The *Choir of Jimmie Blacksmith* is a powerful, emotionally exhausting, professionally executed and so demanding in its theme and performance that attention never strays from the screen.

I am not going into the British obsession of whether this is the "best" Australian film in this period of reevaluation but it has two or three things going for it that make it at least unique. One is Fred Schepers' courage. He has made a film that a lot of people are going to hate. In the foyer of the Regal Entertainment Centre where it had its first Sydney showing (McBorne and Armistead, which was one of the last times, got a few nights earlier) voices of an audience which, because it was an invited one, could be expected to be relatively in-side with the film industry were heard complaining of the "violence" and the "unnecessary sex".

I find it interesting that experienced Australian general violence which started as being a valid protest has now come to be used against necessary truths. People who like nothing much but marksmanship do not differentiate between the violence of, say, *Breaker and Breaker*, which is designed

to excite (though only momentarily) people sitting in comfortable chairs in front of their television sets, and violence which is an integral part of a serious drama. Jimmie Blacksmith is a very serious film and I would have expected Fred Schepers to have thought long and hard before translating the violence of Jimmy Greenaway/Jimmie Blacksmith from the pages of the newspapers of the times and from Thomas Keneally's book on to the screen.

As for the sex, it is difficult to make the coupling of a sluttish poor farm girl and a black man, conducted hurriedly in a stable during temporary escape from the censorship of the boss and his wife, a romantic interlude.

Later in the story, when Jimmie and Gilda are married and living together in a black little hut, the scenes between them are tender. There are, however, no tender scenes between blacks and blacks in the dispeopled settlements. Coplanian love is taken like a drink from a bottle.

That gets the detrayan (other people's, not much) out of the way. Among the splendid plants is the presence of Tommy

Lewis as Jimmie, the sparkling, elegant, almost sweet performance of Freddy Reynolds as Jimmie's brother Mori. Rex Barrett's mentally corrupt, physically decaying police sergeant Farrell. Ruth Craxwell's Mrs. Hensby, scared to the terrible righteousness of the ageing white, genteel, well meaning woman. Angela Pouch's snuffing slut, a born victim whose bare thighs up in some semblance of flawed beauty when Jimmie is eventually kind to her.

In *The Choir's* playground Schepers took an adolescent boy and made an actor of him (Jimmy Burke, who appeared, somewhat older, in *The Boatman*) and in *Jimmie Blacksmith* he has done the same with Tommy Lewis. Everybody in Australia who reads the papers must know by now that Tommy is, or was, an unemployed teenage motor mechanic, twenty years old, from Darwin, who was returning to his home after a trade school course in Melbourne when spotted by the Schepers at Tallawanda. (Unlike David Gulpilil, he had never been a singer-dancer-actor with the tribes (he is half white, whereas Gulpilil is all black.) Yet Lewis is in almost every frame of *Jimmie Blacksmith* and is called upon to do the most prodigious and concentrated "acting". He has the advantage of a small featured, handsome, composed face and an (innocent) expression which changes to appalling ferocity without contention.

But the real advantage he has, of course is the producer/writer director, Fred Schepers, who knows what to do with him in the exact phrase he knows what film-making is all about.



Tommy Lewis as Jimmie Blacksmith

The film opens quietly, with keynote scenes before the titles (which are meticulously and generously and precisely in a fairly linearly optimistic pace. Jimmie wants to get to school to play, will work for almost nothing, a continually deteriorated of all signs and humiliated. It is plain that given a chance Jimmie will become a white man's lackey. He even joins the police

leave — but goes as fast as the surgeon ardently points out only an ugly black, an object of white suspicion, mean looks. And the acquisition of a pair of boots becomes a milestone in Anne's shorted career — and when a black's camp is raided Anne's lips about him, copying the white cops with a will, it takes a real racial shock to disillusion him about the police force.

And following the job for which he is defrauded, evasion from the farm property when his tribal custom shies him the marriage and his possession it brings from white settlers disgusted and disgusted by such a match. Anne's brother And when he breaks, it is told. He wields his murderous act as if of free trucks and later uses the gun in the same way. A phone comes back to him from a discussion in the farmhouse kitchen between the cook and a stockman in which the cook (played with great respect by Thomas Munnally) extrapolates on the fact that Britain has "declared war" on the Boers.

So "I've declared war," Anne shouts

from a great rock as he and Mori flee through the man forced from the police and the farmers.

For about two minutes in the long film Schepers allows himself a little postcardist during a scene in which Mori and Anne and the schoolmaster taken in hostage are repeating a vandalised sacred spot on a an easement. We don't need this reminder, because everything is contained in the script.

In photographing some awe-inspiring landscapes, Ian Baker and Schepers have avoided scenic clichés. Wendy Dykeman's interiors, cinematographic in farmhouse, society and black's camp make a pointed contrast with the hard paddocks, spreading golden plains and towering bush-odd mountains.

The film cost \$1.2 million, which is no surprise, and was bankrolled by Schepers's own company, Pitta House. The Australian Film Commission, the Victorian Film Corporation, Hyatt Theatres (the first Australian film they have helped finance) and private investors.

longtime girlfriend; Len's assistant, the young Chris; Frank's success in the States; Len's philosophical retreat from democracy and the Church and his merely latent hostility to his boss.

That is the "story". What is hard to convey is skill in which the political climate of those years has been filtered into the events and the private lives through subtle writing and direction. There is an especially good scene in the progression room at Constantine when the narrator (the narrator was an important part of several productions, in much the same way that a front man on television will gain viewers or reject them; think of the several narrators as the Brian Henderson or James Dobble of the *Big Day*) objects to a line in his script. His way of increasing it reflects on a government to which he feels he is beholden for other work. The time little interlude between the narrator and the editor, a "radical point", is a highlight of the film.

The film is made in a mixture of black and white and colour, each of the material from the several archives as has been used in of course in b and w. Other reversed material has been retained, with astonishing impact. It would be quite wrong to assume that the characters and "story" are simply used to fill space between the actual newscasts of such events as the Rada car and bus accident, the arrival of the first few hundred thousand immigrants under Arthur Calwell's promise scheme the return of Robert Menzies to power in 1949, floods, bushfires etc. These factual records are, however, likely to be the biggest attraction for two sections of the public, the people who were around when it was all happening will take a nostalgic interest, and obtain a certain pleasure from having their word or best memories confirmed; and those who have just heard about it from parents or grandparents may be curious to see what it was really like.

There are some well-structured characters in *Newsfront*, and surprisingly, in view of the massive amount of action in the film, they are given worthy interpretations. Chris Haywood as Chris is interestingly beguiling, there is an interesting performance from Doc Crook as Maguire's boss and others from John Ewart, Wendy Hughes, Hyatt Brown, Angela Patrick (especially Angela Patrick as the Italian Catholic wife who remarries her delinquent for sex into a case for Catholic scriptures about contraband) and John Dineen.

Gerald Kennedy, a patchy actor, is less successful as Frank Maguire, although the character itself is a valid exposition of the kind of Australian who was then, and is now, on threat to the worst kind of American selfish.

The film is produced by David Ellick, directed by Phil Noyce, funded by the Australian Film Commission, the NSW Film Corporation (its first effort) and released by Roadshow. The idea for the story is said to have come from the terrible mind of Bob Ellis. *Newsfront* went into Cannes a cheaper, and emerged with some glory. It will screen at the New York film festival in September and will open London's festival in November.

Newsfront — a triumph of casting



Bill Hunter (Len Maguire) in *Newsfront*

I am going to find it very hard to explain why I think *Newsfront* is such a successful film, and will be so in terms of box office, because how do you convey the brotherhood, the brotherhood and passion of a story which is really about a knowledge of someone who has neither physical strength nor mental agility and who gives his all to his job, which is not much of a job anyway? It would have been more logical to have built a drama around the great Danmar Pater, who is now a kind of saint of cinematography. Of course Pater gets mental obsession, but it is clearly Len Maguire, the injured Catholic descendant of Irish immigrants, whose son to be admired, a stout example of mateship and throw-away decency, played in a triumph of

casting by Bill Hunter.

To depict for a moment, I don't see Hunter coming up as the Spencey Treaty of the new Australian film industry. He has not the right craginess. But there could not be a better Len Maguire.

The story is about the Maguire brothers who are rival cinematographers at Constantine and Newco, from just after the second world war up to 1946, the year Melbourne staged the Olympic Games. (For Constantine and Newco you may read Constantine and Fox Movietone, both Sydney based operations.) Frank Maguire is a girl-fier, Len an occasionally inept workhorse. Frank goes off to the US, Len stays at home. The story branches off Len's domestic life, Frank's abandonment of his



Concertos and lieder's last refuge



Violinists have never been satisfied with having only two solo concertos and one double concerto by J S Bach. Their resentment that Bach, in fact, composed more violin concertos than has led them to search through his other concertos in the hope of finding lost violin concertos hidden in them. They have been encouraged in so doing because Bach's known habit of arranging his own and other people's concertos in various forms.

Prompted by enthusiasm and ingenuity, the violin enthusiasts have come to the conclusion that some of the missing concertos which they feel rightly should be there do exist in the form of harpsichord concertos. The object of several researchers in this field has been to identify which of the harpsichord concertos might have been violin concertos and how they can be restored.

The harpsichordists, for their part, might even a little indulgent at being deprived of sole ownership of some of these works. In support of violinists, however, it must be said that the harpsichord concertos are seldom effective in a modern concert-hall setting. It would be better if they were to end as chamber music, as it seems they were conceived, with no more than one or two players to such excellent part. The harpsichord is rarely effective in a contemporary concert-hall without amplification; the violin does have the necessary carrying power.

Some of the results of this process of restoration can be heard on a disc made by Nikolaus Harnoncourt's *Concertos Mendelssohn* of Vienna, with Harnoncourt's wife, Alice, as violinist in two violin concertos in G major and D minor (recreated from the harpsichord concertos in F major and D minor, respectively) and with Inge Schabert playing the oboe d'amore in a concerto recreated from the harpsichord concerto in A [Teldec 4-6202]. It was kind of the researchers to restore an oboe d'amore concerto, especially as the oboe d'amore lobby could not be considered particularly powerful. The assumptions about the original character of these works, by the way, are based on considerations of range, typical ligature, passages which look like adaptations to fit a

new medium and so on. They are, of course, open to challenge, and it may well be that we are far from having the last word on the subject of concerto restoration in Bach. Harnoncourt's forces play on original instruments of approximately 18th century vintage or on copies of them and have no trouble in maintaining a satisfactory balance between soloist and orchestral group even without the aid of studio recording. Listeners who know the group's work will not be surprised to learn that the performances are stylish and agreeably plausible for the reconstruction attempt. Only time will tell whether the concertos become more popular in this form than in the harpsichord version which have come down to us. I imagine that keyboard players will not give up the big D major concerto at just without a struggle.

Listeners who record a series of Mozart piano concertos are inevitably well-served. The pianist who has no particular animus or sympathy for this marvellous genre of music will be careful not to bring himself except in an occasional concert performance. My own current favourite series of Mozart concertos recordings is the one in progress on Philips involving the pianist Alfred Brendel and Muzart's Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Although the practice of having the pianist as his own musical director can make an interesting effect in a concert I am not sure that there is much point in doing it on a recording. There are obvious small impressions of clanking and general noise, as can be heard on the latest disc in the Mozart concertos series undertaken by Murray Perahia and the English Chamber Orchestra.

The two concertos are the celebrated D major, K466 and the smaller scale one in F K463. I think a conductor would have made sure that the orchestra characterised the key opening bars in the D minor concerto more effectively. The players follow Perahia very well, but there are passages where, with the best will in the world, they are not quite together. About Perahia's own piano playing there need be no reservations at all. He is clearly using the best and most suitable pianos who have ever attempted a Mozart concerto cycle. I find him far superior to Harnoncourt's often mismanaged performances and comparable with, though different in style from, the work of Alfred Brendel in the Philips series. A particularly magnificent movement on this disc is the slow movement of the F major concerto K463. Perahia takes it slower than usual, and the tempo works beautifully. It is a particularly memorable passage as a record which will give pleasure to Mozart-lovers.

It may well be that records will be the last refuge of the traditional lieder recital. That is a genre perceptibly dying in the

concert hall, not for lack of any intrinsic quality in the music but because the social assumptions of concert-going have changed. Some songs in the lieder tradition can be readily understood and enjoyed in every sense of the word by all listeners. Others do need extraordinarily close attention to the text and to the subtleties of the composer's treatment of it. At the central part of the lieder tradition is, as its name implies, in German, the recital that many who have attended lieder recitals have had in large part of the enjoyment which ought to be theirs. At one time the attitude to the concert-hall tradition in our community was such that some concert-goers might have felt a certain virtue in looking bored or unimpressed for parts of a lieder recital. I think that kind of stoic church-going attitude has gradually weakened in the last few years. That is not so disengaged lieder in themselves, merely to recognise that they constitute a particularly intimate art for which some of our larger halls are usually unsuitable and also to admit that there has been in the past an element of preciosity in the attitude of some singers and some listeners. The songs or the best of them, are too good to lose and recording offers an opportunity for listeners to study them and enjoy them at leisure with an opportunity to repeat an unfamiliar song until it becomes familiar and with no obstacles to making a translation of the text in parallel with the original in a well-lit room without disturbing anybody else. The Dutch singer Eddy Arnding has been particularly active in recording lieder of various kinds for Philips usually in cooperation with that most experienced and adaptable accompanist, Delius Balaban.

Three disc of Romantic Lieder (Philips 8300 100) is an appealing anthology which includes some well-known songs (Schumann's "Devotion" and "The Naiad Troop", Hugo Wolf's "The Gardener" and Richard Strauss's "Serenade", among them) but uses as period title to include the work of a few less familiar composers such as Miss Roger, Robert Franz and Hans Pfitzner. Schubert, Martin, Brahms and Carl Loewe are also represented on a disc offering an outstanding recording of songs which have clearly been chosen for their intrinsic appeal and which would be an outstanding introduction to a whole genre of music at the same time as it is likely to be welcomed by a person with a well-stocked record library. The recording is outstandingly good. Eddy Arnding has a cool purity of style which wears well and avoids the kind of cynicism and humanism which have become drawbacks of over-charged lieder performance. The songs are all in German but there is a well printed leaflet with parallel translations enclosed in the sleeve.



Sixteen new Australasian plays

Lorna Kol, *Twentieth Playful Person*
Two Queensland One Act Plays For Frustab
 Playful Press
 Helen Marek, *The Autumn of a Bishop*
 Playful Press
 Simon Donner and Ian Derrickson, *Moss of Steel*
 Playful Press
 Jill Stanger, *Cartwheel* (Edward Arnold)
 Bill Reed, *Cass Basher Basher* (Edward Arnold)
 David Pearson C.A.S., *Land of Flowers, Rites of the Nation*
 Bruce Mason, *The Pohutukawa Tree* (NZLP Press Milburn)
 Bruce Mason, *The End of the Golden Weather*
 (NZLP Press Milburn)
 Brian McNell, *The Two Tigers* (Pine Milburn)
 Roger Hall Glaze, *Time Once Victims*, VUP
 Currency Press

Queensland don't seem to travel well.

Twentieth, actually, is set in New South Wales — a rather honey-banded small town drama which achieves some power through the used occasion of a holiday resort town with the usual complement of madness and passion. As a typical of this sort of play all the action takes place offstage, but the births, marriages and deaths attendant on the plot are announced by headstrong women who show a surprise at their pieces of news not shared by the audience or reader. *Two One Act Plays For Frustab* (Simon Hamilton's *Passion* and Paul Collins's *Cartwheel*) give an alarming insight into Queensland play festivals. They are both very heavy and rather obscure in intention — present rise deep in the Sunshine State Helen Marek's *The Autumn of a Bishop* is an odd play released by a marvellous sense of place. It is set in an old warehouse, down by a river, hovering on the brink of a Darlingeside pier. The play is called an "anti-thriller" apparently because you never find out what it's all about. The characters are all very as plausible, but there's only one murder. Finally, from Playful, and most importantly, in *Moss of Steel*, by Simon Donner and Ian Derrickson — a 'musical spoof' he who's all about Superman. It has a cast of thousands and a million animal odd jobs, such as are loved by schoolkids and, indeed, the reviewer. It has headstrong energy and I hope a school near me does it soon.

Edward Arnold has started a series called "Mosaic New Plays", edited by Mary Lued. Jill Stanger's *Cartwheel* is about a convict who becomes the mistress of Darcy Wentworth on the ship out, and goes back to the first WC (Wentworth). This part of the action is comically interrupted in the "adult" step to discuss the psychological motivation of the characters in a rather contrived "lookism". The play is an attempt to have an historical romance as well as a bit of psychological and sociological comment without having to mix it together. Bill Reed's *Cass Basher Basher* is about dying, according to the author. In it three men are trapped in a collapsed mine shaft, saying and doing various nonsensical and witty things. It is very static and intense — nothing happens, most of the time you can hardly see the characters, there is no humour, no romance but a lot of metaphorical obscurity. Doubtless oblique for audiences prepared to meet the "overwriting demands" the play makes.

MALTA is a journal of creative writing published by the Poetries College of Advanced Education, Volume 2, 1977, contains a grill for the Australian Stage Company by Neil Cherry and two plays: Michael Coo's *The Gift* and Bob Herbert's *Man of Respect*. *The Gift*

received attention in Sydney and Melbourne last year for its lively beginning, but without the delight of that production it is hard to see why the play was written. Martin, the suffering artist with nothing to say, could very well have written the play himself. The ending is a complete cop out ("I am no prophet come to tell you all ..."). *Man of Respect* is an Elysian with modern Southern Australian, the mafia providing the blood. As with many other modern writings of Greek studies the action is determined not by fate but by driving passions explained psychologically. Eileen naturally loves her doll.

Isabel contains three plays by Karl Florsheim, and is published by the author. It seems unlikely that they will ever be produced, except perhaps the third play, *Shawcross*. The first, *Reprieve* for *Religion* calls for a resolve with three concrete sections which rise to form a giant cone shaped mountain, the whole of which takes off like a rocket ship at the end of the play. Mr Florsheim has some talent but his business is coy and aggravating and his demands on production prohibitive.

It is with relief that one turns to four volumes of New Zealand plays, published by Pine Milburn and distributed in this country by Currency Press. Bruce Mason's *The Pohutukawa Tree* was first produced there in 1957 and has since become a classic of New Zealand drama. Its subject is as old as the hills and as impressive. The dignity of the old Maori queen Arihia and her refusal to bow to the Western influences that have subjugated the rest of her people are very uplifting. The same author's *The End of the Golden Weather* is a prose narrative about his childhood which he has performed over five hundred times as a dramatic monologue. The writing is a little rich in parts, but the central image — that summer is not just a season but a state of mind — is powerful and the poem itself evokes a childhood in a small New Zealand coastal town.

The Two Tigers of Brian McNell's play are Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murray. The story of their love and separation is told skilfully, imaginatively and with great feeling. The Europe of the beginning of this century which attracted so many Australians and New Zealanders is still food for history for us all.

Roger Hall's *Glaze Time* is a clever and very funny bureaucratic comedy about life in the Public Service. It is full of topical New Zealand jokes but could do as well here as it has apparently done there where it has been "one of the most exciting phenomena in New Zealand theatre history". If we continue to import plays from overseas we could do worse than import some of these four New Zealanders not so far away.

Bruce Mason's *The Pohutukawa Tree*



When sixteen new plays from Australia and New Zealand come up for review in one month, then either the season is very lively indeed, or the mud at the bottom of the pond has been stirred too deeply by enthusiastic publishers. It is a pity that so many of these plays are read. What we have here mostly is interesting new publishers, not interesting new plays.

Playful Press is a branch of the Queensland Playwrights' Laboratory, and has just published its first four volumes, under the editorship of Rodney H. Lerner. Queensland for years seems to have had more playwrights per head of population than any other state, but they have had little impact outside the border. Lorna Kol's *Twentieth* had a production in Sydney recently but in general plays from

GUIDE

A.C.T.

CANNIBAL THEATRE HQ 1800
Dancer Company of New South Wales
Pippin Sep 3-16

CANNIBAL THEATRE POWER HQ 1800
Potance: There is Complicity
The Consequences by Philip Rydell

Sep 11-15
Fashion and Taboo by Barry Scrimgeour
Sep 18-22
Heads and The Education of Simon: Open by
Howard Gertler Director, Pam Roseborough
Sep 25-29

CHILDREN'S STREET HALL
Children's Children's Theatre (02 8781)
Winner the Puck adapted by the company from
the books by A. A. Milne Director, Carol
Woodrow Sep 1, 3, 4-7

**AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP
STAGE (02 3348)**
The Secret South by George David Director,
Warwick Baxter Sep 4-7 11-14

PLAYHOUSE HQ 1800
Firestorm by Roger Hall Director John Tasker
Sep 28 Oct 20

THEATRE 1074223
Children's Repertory Society
Aloud: A New Dialogue by Alan Ayckbourn
Director, Michael Lamberton, Design, Russell
Brown Sep 6-12, Wednesday to Sunday

TYVOLI THEATRE RESTAURANT (09 3413)
Headline Capers
Prizes and Savouries (throughout)
For more contact Margaret Webb on
41 2192

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY 068 3505
The Assassination by David Williamson, directed
by Michael Roff, in repertory with *Hillman's
Cock* based by Martin Kennedy, directed by
Steve Agnew (to Sep 23)
An Evening with Adolf Hitler by Jander
Compton and Margaret O'Sullivan, directed by
Margaret O'Sullivan (from Sep 19)

**ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES
(02 46 11)**
Schools Tour
Swimming Pivers: Five (throughout) from
Sep 11

Am Gator: postcard: Metropolis: acts from
Sep 18
Date Woodcock and Pupper: Workshop North
acts from from Sep 11
Wayne Russell Brown: acts (unannounced),
March acts and Harvey acts from Sep 11
Edward Corbett: Biscuits acts from Sep 11
Alfred Hobb: folk songs: postcard: South Coast
from Sep 18
Bob Wilson: magazine, chronicle, poster, poster
Western New South Wales acts from Sep 18

**AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE (09 9333)**
Roulette: Riddings — Friday night, Parade

Theatre from 4 pm to 9 pm
Saverio: Morning Workshop — National
Institute of Dramatic Art from 10 am to 1 pm
Allegiance (to Sep 23)

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (0208)
Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House
La Traviata (Puccini) Marmontel's of
Nuremberg (Wagner) La Boheme (Puccini)

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (02 9477)
Jamb of God by John Summers, directed by
Hayes Gordon (throughout Sep)

FRANK STRAITS BULL 74 BUSH
THEATRE RESTAURANT (01 4571)
Allegiance of Thursday with Noel Murphy Keith
Brecht, John Patterson Paul Bryant and Alan
Purman directed by Frank Straits
choreographed by George Gordon (throughout Sep)

GENEAL THEATRE (02 3028)
The Agony Rites, by Henry James directed by
Ray Ascarelli (throughout Sep)

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (02 3411)
Oreoch directed by Sir Robert Hilderson
starring John Waters (throughout)

KIRK GALLERY (06 790)
Lovers by Brian Ford with Margaret Roberts
Goffi Usher, Andrea Kelland Gary O'Connor,
Ivan Hargrave and Ann Haden: From 10 to
Five Steel Theatre: to Sep 17

MARLAN STREET HQ 3348
Catch Me If You Can: adapted from the French
by Jack Williamson and Wilfrid Gilford, directed
by Robert Lenz: To Sep 9
The Rules of the Formulas by Fran Arnold,
directed by Brian Young: From Sep 12

**MARINETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA
(02 1200)**
Music Room, Sydney Opera House
The Miser: Poodle Box and St George and the
Dragon with a special appearance of Bill
Smechowski performed by the Marianne
Hickmang Puppets: To Sep 9

**MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT
(069 4223)**
Cuckoo by David Wright and directed by
Michael Bocky (throughout)

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (071 4583)
Dance: a musical team starring the Topless
family and Lee Young (throughout)

NEW THEATRE (02 9468)
Femmes, by Marion Goffi directed by Kevin
Jackson (throughout Sep)

NIMROD THEATRE (099 3081)
Nimrodophony by Franz Kallin adapted for the
stage, directed and designed by Steven Berloff
cosume designer Sylvia Jacobs music by
Nicholas Lyons with Ralph Cornall Richard
Coffey Margaret Cantillon, Jesse Finn, and
George Steinhorn: To Oct 6

OLD TOTE (063 6123)
Drama Theatre
My Power, by Noel Coward directed by Ted
Craig with Patricia Kennedy, David Middleton,
Jan Hamilton John Warlock, Ronald Fells
Susanne Ruyshon: Barry Goss Judy Mann and
Conrad Hobbs: To Sep 3
The Night of the Ignorant by Tennessee

Williams directed by Ted Craig with Ronald
Fells John Fells Maggie Kirkpatrick, Miss
Poppo, Lynne Murphy and Lorna Leedy,
directed by James Redwood

PARADE THEATRE
The Assassination (to Oct 6) by Anne Imhoff
directed by Peter Collingwood, with Greta
Doddrell, Robert Highton Geoff Kirby and Colin
de Bary: To Sep 17

ORANGECTIVE THEATRE (02 1515)
Children's Children's Theatre
Winter The Puck adapted by the company from
the books by A. A. Milne Director, Carol
Woodrow Sep 15-16

PARIS THEATRE (02 9199)
Visions by Louis Nivola directed by Rex
Clapham with Kate Fitzpatrick and John
Gahan

Q THEATRE: Parrish (041 21 5739)
Zorro: a new life: Music by Jon Olson, directed
by Richard Wood: From Sep 1-3 Oct 6

SEYMOUR CENTRE (042 8538)
York Theatre
Crown Assassination: written by Reginald
Ryton, directed by Peter Williams, with Anne Salter in
Queen Mary and John Hamilton in Edward
VIII: To Sep 9

**King Lear by William Shakespeare: starring The
Queensland Theatre Company, with special
guest artist William Mitchell: From Sep 12**
Downstairs Theatre

Relish by Allen Burns and Charles Marowitz
directed by Mark Redman with the Cap Road
Youth Theatre: Four performances on Sep 8 &
9

The Truncated History of Peter Corvado
directed by Rex Clapham, with the Sydney
University Theatre Workshop and French
Department: From Sep 21

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (093 68)
Labyrinth Hall
La Strada 4th Anniversary Exhibition: Throughout
Sep

THEATRE ROYAL (02 6110)
The Club by David Williamson, with Ron
Hickford, Jeff Aubrey, Ben Gahan, Barry
Lorenz, Dave Fingleton, Bob Kane: From Sep 9
(to)

WHITE HORSE HOTEL: Newcastle (02 130)
Brenda directed and directed by Ian Tucker,
written by Peter Skerfving: Throughout Aug
For more contact Cindy Baker on 157 1200

QUEENSLAND

BRISBANE ARTS THEATRE (06 2344)
Murder on the Nile by Agatha Christie, directed
by James Savage: To Sep 9

**Revel by Simon Gray, directed by Ian
Thomson: From Sep 14**
Children's Theatre: Under the Mistletoe: Re-
written and directed by Eugene Hickey: From
Sep 3

CAMERATA (06 4561)
As University of Queensland by the late
Colleen as Composer by Septuor, directed by
Donald Redford

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (02) 3554
Laughing Unleashed! Directed by Brian Smith

HOLE IN THE WALL (08) 2400

Between the Lines — a play about Henry
Lawson. Directed by John Milson, with
Alexander Hay. Sept 30

NATIONAL THEATRE (02) 3550

Playhouse: *Passion* by Cullen and Sullivan
Directed by John Milson. Aug 28, Sep 2
Antony & Cleopatra. Directed by Stephen
Barry. Sep 12, 14, 16

Crossroom: *Keep On Truckin'*. Presented by
Christine Randall. Directed by Stephen Barry

REGAL THEATRE (08) 3307

Doc! Photographs and His Car. Directed by
Kenney-Carson. To Sep 6

WA BALLET COMPANY

Short country tour during Sep

WA OPERA COMPANY (02) 4764

Short country tour during Sep

For further contact, Jane Ambrose on 298 6679

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David Williamson by Terry O'Connell & Kate
Mullin. Sep 14, Oct 1



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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 3

Name

Address

Across

- 1 Dear EE, troubled fellows control government (7)
- 2 Aisle and boulevard standing point (7)
- 3 "I will" Sounds like the place where you say it (2)
- 10 Mountains you could have a meal on (2-4)
- 11 Climb hard to achieve nothing (5-6)
- 12 Play music like him on (10) (2-4)
- 14 What you are right now (4-5)
- 15 Traps are good in Venice, especially, are here (4)
- 18 This is my job as it is (4)
- 19 Six long all French, currently a very good series plays here (2-3)
- 22 See birds and flowers (8)
- 24 A challenge for (4-6)
- 26 "I heard a voice and sleep no more" (10) (2-4)
- 27 "Mother with crown" known name (10) (2-4)
- 28 One with the white head (7)
- 29 Ball not changed for dance (10)

Down

- 1 Possible word with twice and become real (7)
- 2 I tell you — a down and out (8)
- 3 Super for quality in your paper, but not in most (4)
- 4 A roll in the air the beginning of the end (4)
- 5 Russian lady or today (10) (2-4)
- 6 Punter (10) (2-4) (6-8)
- 7 Can between two points and run away (5)
- 8 Insects to receive guests (7)
- 13 Deluge with violence as a chess move and (10)
- 15 Where medals are best delivered from (10)
- 17 Pause for television and relief (8)
- 18 Deliveries to a committed dentist (7)
- 20 Greek one but a good performance (7)
- 21 Drive into this type of king (4)
- 23 Meet and greet out (10) (2-4)
- 25 Ben says it to be a reason (10) (2-4)



Last month's answers